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THE WORKS

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JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D.

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DISSERTATIONS

MORAL AND CRITICAL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

On Memory and Imagination.
On Dreaming.
The Theory of Language.
On Fable and Romance.
On the Attachments of Kindred.
Illustrations on Sublimity.

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ON

FABLE

AND

ROMANCE.

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ON

FABLE AND ROMANCE.

THE love of truth is natural to man; and adherence to it, his indispensable duty. But to frame a fabulous narrative, for the purpose of instruction or of harmless amusement, is no breach of veracity, unless one were to obtrude it on the world for truth. The fabulist and the novel writer deceive nobody; because, though they study to make their inventions probable, they do not even pretend that they are true: at least, what they may pretend in this way is considered only as words of course, to which nobody pays any regard. Fabulous narrative has accordingly been common in all ages of the world, and practised by teachers of the most respectable character.

It is owing, no doubt, to the weakness of human nature, that fable should ever have been found a necessary, or a convenient, vehicle for

truth. But we must take human nature as it is: and, if a rude multitude cannot readily comprehend a moral or political doctrine, which they need to be instructed in, it may be as allowable to illustrate that doctrine by a fable, in order to make them attend, and understand it, as it is for a physician to strengthen a weak stomach with cordials, in order to prepare it for the business of digestion. Such was the design of Jotham's parable of the trees choosing a king, in the ninth chapter of the book of Judges: and such that famous apologue, of a contention between the parts of the human body, by which Menenius Agrippa satisfied the people of Rome, that the welfare of the state depended on the union and good agreement of the several members of it. In fact, the common people are not well qualified for argument. A short and pithy proverb, which is easily remembered; or little tales, that appeal as it were to their senses, weigh more with them than demonstration.

We need not wonder, then, to find, that, in ancient times, moral precepts were often delivered in the way of proverb or aphorism, and enforced and exemplified by fictitious narrative. Of those fables that are ascribed to Esop, some are no doubt modern, but others bear the stamp of antiquity. And nothing can be better con-

trived, than many of them are, for the purpose of impressing moral truth upon the memory, as well as the understanding. The disappointment, that frequently attends an excessive desire of accumulation, is finely exemplified in the fable of the dog and his shadow; and the ruinous and ridiculous nature of ambition is with equal energy illustrated in that of the frog and the ox. These little allegories we are apt to undervalue, because we learned them at school; but they are not for that reason the less valuable. We ought to prize them as monuments of ancient wisdom, which have long contributed to the amusement and instruction of mankind, and are entitled to applause, on account of the propriety of the invention.

The Greek apologues ascribed to Esop, and the Latin ones of Phedrus, are masterpieces in this way of writing; and have hardly been equalled by the best of our modern fabulists. They are (at least many of them are, for some are trifling) remarkable for the simplicity of the style; and for the attention, which their authors have generally given, to the nature of the animals, and other things that are introduced as agents and speakers. For in most of the modern fables, invented by Gay, La Fontaine, L'Estrange, Poggio, and others, the contrivance is

less natural; and the language, though simple, is quaint, and full of witticism. That a dog should snap at the shadow of a dog, and by so doing lose the piece of flesh that was in his own mouth, is suitable to the character of the animal, and is indeed a very probable story: but that an elephant should converse with a bookseller about Greek authors, or a hare entreat a calf to carry her off on his back, and save her from the hounds, is a fiction wherein no regard is had to the nature of things. In this, as in the higher sorts of fable, it is right to adhere, as much as may be, to probability. Brute animals, and vegetables too, may be allowed to speak and think: this indulgence is granted, from the necessity of the case; for, without it, their adventures could neither improve nor entertain us: but, with this exception, nature should not be violated; nor the properties of one animal or vegetable ascribed to a different one. Frogs have been seen inflated with air, at least, if not with pride; dogs may swim rivers; a man might take a frozen viper into his bosom, and be bit to death for his imprudence; a fox might play with a tragedian's headpiece; a lamb and a wolf might drink of the same brook, and the former lose his life on the occasion: but who ever heard of

an elephant reading Greek, or a hare riding on the back of a calf?

The wisdom of antiquity was not satisfied with conveying short lessons of morality in these apologues, or little tales. The poets entered upon a more extensive field of fable; in order to convey a more refined species of instruction, and to please by a more exquisite invention, and a higher probability. But I confine myself at present to prose fable.

One of the first specimens of fabulous history, that appeared in these western parts of the world, is the *Cyropædia* of Xenophon. This work, however, we are not to consider as of the nature of romance; for the outlines of the story are true. But the author takes the liberty to feign many incidents; that he may set in a variety of lights the character of Cyrus, whom he meant to exhibit as the model of a great and good prince. The work is very elegant and entertaining, and abounds in moral, political, and military knowledge. It is, nevertheless, to be regretted, that we have no certain rule for distinguishing what is historical in it, from what is fabulous. The history of Cyrus the great, the founder of the Persian empire, who has the honour to be mentioned by name in the Old Testament, is surely worth knowing. Yet we are

much in the dark in regard to it. The account given of him by Herodotus differs greatly from Xenophon's; and in many instances we know not which to prefer. It is observable however, that Xenophon's description of the manner in which Cyrus took Babylon, by turning aside the course of the Euphrates, and entering, through the empty channel, under the walls of the city, agrees very well with several intimations of that event, which we find in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.

Allegorical fables were not unknown in the days of Xenophon. The table, or picture, of Cebes the Theban was written about this time; as well as the story of Hercules conversing with Virtue and Vice, and preferring the honours promised by the former to the pleasures offered by the latter. Cebes's picture of human life excels in accuracy of description, justness of allegory, and a sweet simplicity of style. The fable of Hercules, as originally written by Prodicus, is lost, and seems not to have been extant in the time of Cicero;* but Xenophon gives a full and elegant abstract of it, in the beginning of his second book of *Memorabilia*.

Excepting some allegorical fables scattered

* Cicero de Officiis. lib. i. cap. 32.

up and down in Plato, I do not recollect, among the classick productions of Greece and Rome, any other remarkable specimen of prose fable: for the heathen mythology, though full of allegories, I am not to touch upon in this place, on account of its connection with poetry; and because my chief purpose is, to inquire into the origin and nature of the modern romance.

But, first, it may be proper to observe, that the oriental nations have long been famous for fabulous narrative. The indolence peculiar to the genial climates of Asia, and the luxurious life which the kings and other great men, of those countries, lead in their seraglios, have made them seek for this sort of amusement, and set a high value upon it. When an eastern prince happens to be idle, as he commonly is, and at a loss for expedients to kill the time, he commands his grand vizier, or his favourite, to tell him stories. Being ignorant, and consequently credulous; having no passion for moral improvement, and little knowledge of nature; he does not desire, that they should be probable, or of an instructive tendency: it is enough if they be astonishing. And hence it is, no doubt, that those oriental tales are so extravagant. Every thing is carried on by enchantment and prodigy; by fairies, genii, and demons, and wooden horses.

which, on turning a peg, fly through the air with inconceivable swiftness.

Another thing remarkable in these eastern tales, is, that their authors expatiate, with peculiar delight, in the description of magnificence; rich robes, gaudy furniture, sumptuous entertainments, and palaces shining in gold, or sparkling with diamonds. This too is conformable to the character and circumstances of the people. Their great men, whose taste has never been improved by studying the *simplicity* of nature and art, pique themselves chiefly on the *splendour* of their equipage, and the vast quantities of gold, jewels, and curious things, which they can heap together in their repositories.

The greatest, indeed the only collection, that I am acquainted with, of oriental fables, is the *thousand and one tales*, commonly called *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*. This book, as we have it, is the work of Mons. Galland of the French academy, who is said to have translated it from the Arabick original. But whether the tales be really Arabick, or invented by Mons. Galland, I have never been able to learn with certainty. If they be oriental, they are translated with unwarrantable latitude; for the whole tenour of the style is in the French mode: and the Calif of Bagdat, and the emperour of China, are

addressed in the same terms of ceremony, which are usual at the court of France. But this, though in my opinion it takes away from the value of the book, because I wish to see eastern manners in an eastern tale, is no proof, that the whole work is by M. Galland: for the French are so devoted to their own ceremonies, that they cannot endure any other; and seldom fail to season their translations, even of the gravest and most ancient authors, with the fashionable forms of Parisian civility.

As the Arabian Nights' Entertainment is a book which most young people in this country are acquainted with, I need not draw any character of it, or remark that it exactly answers the account already given of oriental fable. There is in it great luxury of description, without any elegance; and great variety of invention, but nothing that elevates the mind, or touches the heart. All is wonderful and incredible; and the astonishment of the reader is more aimed at, than his improvement either in morality, or in the knowledge of nature. Two things, however, there are, which deserve commendation, and may entitle it to one perusal. It conveys a pretty just idea of the government, and of some of the customs, of those eastern nations; and there is somewhere in it a story of a barber and

his six brothers, that contains many good strokes of satire and comick description. I may add, that the character of the calif Haroun Alraschid is well drawn; and that the story of forty thieves destroyed by a slave is interesting, and artfully conducted. The voyages of Sindbad claim attention: they were certainly attended to, by the author of Gulliver's Travels.

Tales in imitation of the oriental have oft been attempted by English, and other European, authors: who, together with the figurative style, and wild invention of the Asiaticks, (which, being extravagant, are easily imitated) endeavour also to paint the customs and manners of that people. They give us good store of gold and jewels; and eunuchs, slaves, and necromancers in abundance: their personages are all mahometan, or pagan, and subject to the despotick government of califs, viziers, bashaws, and emperours; they drink sherbet, rest on sofas, and ride on dromedaries. We have Chinese tales, Tartarian tales, Persian tales, and Mogul tales; not to mention the tales of the fairies and genii; some of which I read in my younger days: but, as they have left no trace in the memory, I cannot give any account of them.

In the *Spectator*, *Rambler*, and *Adventurer*, there are many fables in the eastern manner;

most of them very pleasing, and of a moral tendency. *Rasselas*, by Johnson, and *Almoran and Hamet*, by Hawkesworth, are celebrated performances in this way. The former is admirable in description, and in that exquisite strain of sublime morality by which the writings of this great and good man are so eminently distinguished: of the latter, the style is rhetorical and solemn, and the sentiments are in general good, but the plan is obscure, and so contrived as to infuse perplexing notions of the divine providence; a subject, which the elegant writer seems to have considered very superficially, and very confusedly.* Addison excels in this sort of fable. His vision of Mirzah, in the second volume of the Spectator, is the finest piece of the kind I have ever seen; uniting the utmost propriety of invention with a simplicity and melody of language, that melts the heart, while it charms and sooths the imagination.

Modern prose fable (if we omit those sorts of it that have been already hinted at) may be divided into two kinds; which, for the sake of distinction, I shall call the ALLEGORICAL and the POETICAL. The allegorical part of modern prose fable may be subdivided into two species, the

* See the preface to his Voyages.

historical, and the *moral;* and the poetical part I shall also subdivide into two sorts, the *serious*, and the *comick*. Thus the prose fable of the moderns may be distributed into four species; whereof I shall speak in their order: 1. The historical allegory; 2. The moral allegory; 3. The poetical and serious fable; 4. The poetical and comick fable. These two last I comprehend under the general term ROMANCE.

I. The FABULOUS HISTORICAL ALLEGORY exhibits real history disguised by feigned names, and embellished with fictitious adventures. This sort of fable may also be subdivided into the *serious* and the *comick*.

1. Of the former, the best specimen I know is the *Argenis;* written in Latin, about the beginning of the last century, by John Barclay, a Scotchman: and supposed to contain an allegorical account of the civil wars of France during the reign of Henry the third. I have read only part of the work: and what I read I never took the trouble to decipher, by means of the key which in some editions is subjoined to it, or to compare the fictitious adventures of Meleander and Lycogenes with the real adventures that are alluded to. I therefore am not qualified to criticise the performance: but can freely recommend it, as in some places very entertaining, as

abounding in lively description, and remarkable for the most part, though not uniformly, for the elegance of the language.

2. We have a *comick* specimen of the historical allegory, in the *History of John Bull;* a pamphlet written by the learned and witty Dr. Arbuthnot, and commonly printed among the works of Swift. It was published in queen Ann's time: and intended as a satire on the duke of Marlborough, and the rest of the whig ministry, who were averse to the treaty of peace that was soon after concluded at Utrecht. The war, which the queen carried on against the French and Spaniards, is described under the form of a law suit, that John Bull, or England, is said to have been engaged in with some litigious neighbours. A candid account of facts is not to be expected in an allegorical tale, written with the express design to make a party ridiculous. The work, however, has been much read, and frequently imitated. It is full of low humour, which in this piece the author affected; but which he could have avoided if he had thought proper; as he undoubtedly possessed more wit and learning, as well as virtue, than any other writer of his time, Addison excepted. In John Bull, great things are represented as mean; the style is consequently burlesque, and the phrascology, and

most of the allusions, are taken from low life. There is a key printed, in the late editions, at the foot of each page, to mark the coincidence of the fable with the history of that period.

II. The second species of modern fabulous prose I distinguished by the name of the *moral allegory*. Moral and religious allegories were frequent in Europe about two hundred and fifty years ago. Almost all the dramatick exhibitions of that time were of this character. In them, not only human virtues and vices personified, but also angels both good and evil, and beings more exalted than angels, were introduced, acting and speaking, as persons of the drama. Those plays, however, notwithstanding their incongruity, were written for the most part with the laudable design of exemplifying religious or moral truth; and hence were called moralities. The publick exhibition of them in England ceased about the time of Shakspeare, or in the end of the sixteenth century: but several of the English moralities are extant, and may be seen in some late collections of old plays. In Spain and Italy they continued longer in fashion. When Milton was on his travels, he happened to witness a representation of this kind, written by one Andrieno, and called *Original Sin;* from

which, rude as it was, he is said to have formed the first draught of the plan of Paradise Lost.

Those were poetical allegories: but I confine myself to such as are in prose, and assume something of the historical form. John Bunyan, an unlettered, but ingenious man, of the last century, was much given to this way of writing. His chief work is the *Pilgrim's Progress;* wherein the commencement, procedure, and completion of the christian life, are represented allegorically, under the similitude of a journey. Few books have gone through so many editions, in so short a time, as the Pilgrim's Progress. It has been read by people of all ranks and capacities. The learned have not thought it below their notice: and among the vulgar it is an universal favourite. I grant, the style is rude, and even indelicate sometimes; that the invention is frequently extravagant; and that in more than one place it tends to convey erroneous notions in theology. But the tale is amusing, though the dialogue be often low: and some of the allegories are well contrived, and prove the author to have possessed powers of invention, which, if they had been refined by learning, might have produced something very noble. This work has been imitated, but with little success. The learned bishop Patrick wrote the *Parable of the*

Pilgrim: but I am not satisfied, that he borrowed the hint, as it is generally thought he did, from John Bunyan. There is no resemblance in the plan; nor does the bishop speak a word of the Pilgrim's Progress, which I think he would have done, if he had seen it. Besides, Bunyan's fable is full of incident: Patrick's is dry, didactick, verbose, and exceedingly barren in the invention.*

Gulliver's Travels are a sort of allegory; but rather satirical and political, than moral. The work is in every body's hands: and has been criticised by many eminent writers. As far as the satire is levelled at human pride and folly; at the abuses of human learning; at the absurdity of speculative projectors; at those criminal or blundering expedients in policy, which we are apt to overlook, or even to applaud, because custom has made them familiar; so far the author deserves our warmest approbation, and his satire will be allowed to be perfectly just, as well as exquisitely severe. His fable is well conducted, and, for the most part consistent with itself,

* The *imprimatur* prefixed to Patrick's Pilgrim is dated April 11, 1665. Bunyan's *Progress* was written, while he was in Bedford prison, where he lay twelve years, from 1660 to 1672; but I cannot find in what year it was first printed.

and connected with probable circumstances. He personates a seafaring man; and with wonderful propriety supports the plainness and simplicity of the character. And this gives to the whole narrative an air of truth; which forms an entertaining contrast, when we compare it with the wildness of the fiction. The style too deserves particular notice. It is not free from inaccuracy: but, as a model of easy and graceful simplicity, it has not been exceeded by any thing in our language; and well deserves to be studied by every person, who wishes to write pure English. These, I think, are the chief merits of this celebrated work; which has been more read, than any other publication of the present century. Gulliver has something in him to hit every taste. The statesman, the philosopher, and the critick, will admire his keenness of satire, energy of description, and vivacity of language: the vulgar, and even children, who cannot enter into these refinements, will find their account in the story, and be highly amused with it.

But I must not be understood to praise the whole indiscriminately. The last of the four voyages, though the author has exerted himself in it to the utmost, is an absurd, and an abominable fiction. It is absurd: because, in presenting us with rational beasts, and irrational men,

it proceeds upon a direct contradiction to the most obvious laws of nature, without deriving any support from either the dreams of the credulous, or the prejudices of the ignorant. And it is abominable: because it abounds in filthy and indecent images; because the general tenour of the satire is exaggerated into absolute falsehood; and because there must be something of an irreligious tendency in a work, which, like this, ascribes the perfection of reason, and of happiness, to a race of beings, who are said to be destitute of every religious idea. But, what is yet worse, if any thing can be worse, this tale represents human nature itself as the object of contempt and abhorrence. Let the ridicule of wit be pointed at the follies, and let the scourge of satire be brandished at the crimes, of mankind: all this is both pardonable, and praiseworthy; because it may be done with a good intention, and produce good effects. But when a writer endeavours to make us dislike and despise, every one his neighbour, and be dissatisfied with that providence, who has made us what we are, and whose dispensations towards the human race are so peculiarly, and so divinely beneficent; such a writer, in so doing, proves himself the enemy, not of man only, but of goodness itself; and his work can never be al-

lowed to be innocent, till impiety, malevolence, and misery, cease to be evils.

The Tale of a Tub, at least, the narrative part of it, is another allegorical fable, by the same masterly hand; and, like the former, supplies no little matter, both of admiration, and of blame. As a piece of humorous writing, it is unequalled. It was the author's first performance, and is, in the opinion of many, his best. The style may be less correct, than that of some of his latter works; but in no other part of his writings has he displayed so rich a fund of wit, humour, and ironical satire, as in the Tale of a Tub. The subject is religion: but the allegory, under which he typifies the reformation, is too mean for an argument of so great dignity; and tends to produce, in the mind of the reader, some very disagreeable associations, of the most solemn truths with ludicrous ideas. Professed wits may say what they please; and the fashion, as well as the laugh, may be for a time on their side: but it is a dangerous thing, and the sign of an intemperate mind, to acquire a habit of making every thing matter of merriment and sarcasm. We dare not take such liberty with our neighbour, as to represent whatever he does or says in a ridiculous light; and yet some men (I wish I could not say, clergymen) think them-

selves privileged to take liberties of this sort with the most awful, and most benign dispensations of providence. That this author has repeatedly done so, in the work before us, and elsewhere, is too plain to require proof.* The

* I know not whether this author is not the only human being, who ever presumed to speak in ludicrous terms of the last judgment. His profane verses on that tremendous subject were not published, so far as I know, till after his death: for Chesterfield's letter to Voltaire, in which they are inserted, and spoken of with approbation (which is no more than one would expect from such a critick), and said to be copied from the original in Swift's handwriting, is dated in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty two. But this is no excuse for the author. We may guess at what was in his mind, when he wrote them; and at what remained in his mind, while he could have destroyed them, and would not. Nor is it any excuse to say, that he makes Jupiter the agent: a christian, granting the utmost possible favour to poetick license, cannot conceive a heathen idol to do that, of which the only information we have is from the word of God, and in regard to which we certainly know, that it will be done by the Deity himself. That humorous and instructive allegory of Addison, (*Spectator*, 558, 559) in which Jupiter is supposed to put it in every person's power to choose his own condition, is not only conformable to ancient philosophy, but is actually founded on a passage of Horace.

I mean not to insinuate, that Swift was favourable to

compliments he pays the church of England I allow to be very well founded, as well as part of the satire which he levels at the church of Rome; though I wish he had expressed both the one and the other with a little more decency of language. But, as to his abuse of the presbyterians, whom he represents as more absurd and frantick, than perhaps any rational beings ever were since the world began, every person of sense and candour, whether presbyterian or not, will acknowledge it, if he know any thing of their history, to be founded in gross misrepresentation. There are other faults in this work, besides those already specified; many vile images, and obscene allusions; such as no well bred man could read, or endure to hear read, in polite company.

III. I come now to the second species of mo-

infidelity. There is good reason to believe he was not; and that, though too many of his levities are inexcusable, he could occasionally be both serious and pious. In fact, an infidel clergyman would be such a compound of execrable impiety and contemptible meanness, that I am unwilling to suppose there can be such a monster. The profaneness of this author I impute to his passion for ridicule, and rage of witticism; which, when they settle into a habit, and venture on liberties with what is sacred, never fail to pervert the mind, and harden the heart.

dern prose fable, to which I gave the appellation of *poetical*, to distinguish it from the former *allegorical* species. In reading the *allegorical prose fable*, we attend not only to the fictitious events that occur in the narrative, but also to those real events that are typified by the allegory: whereas in the *poetical prose fable* we attend only to the events that are before us. Thus, in the Tale of a Tub, I not only mind what is related of three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, but also keep it constantly in view, that those three brothers are by the author meant to be the representatives of the Romish, English, and presbyterian churches: whereas, when I read Robinson Crusoe, or Tom Jones, I attend singly to the narrative; and no *key* is necessary to make me comprehend the author's meaning.

Considering this as the chief part of my subject, I despatched the former parts as briefly as I could, that I might have the more time to employ upon it. The rise and progress of the MODERN ROMANCE, OR POETICAL PROSE FABLE, is connected with many topicks of importance, which would throw (if fully illustrated) great light upon the history and politicks, the manners, and the literature, of these latter ages. Observe, that I call this sort of fable *poetical*, from the nature of the invention; and *prose*, be-

cause it is not in verse. Prose and verse are opposite, but prose and poetry may be consistent. *Tom Jones*, and *Telemachus*, are epick, or narrative poems, though written in prose; the one comick, the other serious and heroick.

The subversion of the Roman empire, by the Goths, Huns, Vandals, and other northern nations, was followed or rather accompanied, with an universal neglect of learning, which continued for some centuries. During this long night of intellectual darkness, the classick writers of Greece and Rome were quite forgotten in these western parts of Europe; and many ancient authors perished irrecoverably. To read and write was then a rare accomplishment. Even the clergy, who performed the service in Latin, according to the usage of the church of Rome, seldom understood the words they pronounced. Nay, it was no uncommon thing for persons of rank, when they had occasion to sign papers of business, to employ a notary to subscribe for them, because they themselves had not learned to write. The very phrase of *signing* a paper came from the practice of putting a mark to it, instead of a name; and this mark was commonly the sign of the cross. Alfred the great, king of England, a prince of excellent parts, and who afterwards made considerable attainments in

learning, was twelve years old, before a master could be found to teach him the alphabet. The very implements of writing were so rare in those days, that the monks would often obliterate valuable manuscripts, by erasing the letters, that they might have the parchment to write upon. Of this a remarkable evidence appeared a few years ago. A scrap of parchment was found, on which part of the book of Tobit had been written, but which, on being narrowly inspected, seemed to have been originally inscribed with something else; and this was at length discovered to be a fragment of Livy. The fragment is now published.

Men are generally credulous, in proportion as they are ignorant. But want of books, and of the knowledge of letters, was not the sole cause of the ignorance that prevailed in the period of which I now speak. There was little, or no commerce in Europe; navigation and industry were neglected; and, except on pilgrimage to the shrines of saints, people seldom travelled beyond the bounds of their native country, or native province. The consequence may easily be guessed at. Not having the means of knowing what had happened in other ages, and being equally uninformed of what was now happening in other countries, they would without scruple give cre-

dit to any fabulous reports that might be told them, concerning what was to be seen in foreign parts. Hence arose a thousand wild ideas, of giants, and dwarfs, dragons, and enchantments, of fairies, ghosts, witches, and hobgoblins. And when once people were satisfied, that such things were common in other lands, it was natural for them to believe, that they were not uncommon in their own. And the same extravagance of fancy, and love of superstition, may always be expected in times of ignorance; especially in countries, where traditions remain concerning ancient history and fable; and where the priests, deluded themselves with visionary legends, not wholly destitute of knowledge, and living retired in gloomy and lonely habitations, find it their interest to deceive, amuse, and terrify the vulgar.

The credulity of mankind in those dark ages is now matter of astonishment. As late as the thirteenth century, when modern literature had made some progress, Dante, a famous Italian poet, published a work in verse, which he called Inferno; wherein he gave a description of the infernal regions, which he says, in the poem, that he had passed through, in company with Virgil; and this poem the common people of that time took for a real history, and seriously believed that

Dante went down to hell from time to time. Sir John Mandeville, an Englishman of learning, set out on his travels in the year one thousand three hundred and twenty; employed thirty years in visiting foreign countries; and, at his return to Europe, published the history of his adventures in three languages, Latin, English, and Italian. His book, before publication, was presented to the pope, who, after comparing it with the *mappa mundi*, was pleased to give it the sanction of his authority: a proof, that it not only was believed by the author, and by his holiness, but was also thought credible enough according to the notions of those times. Yet this book, though Mandeville seems to have been an honest, and by no means an ignorant man, contains the most absurd fables. The author gravely tells us, that he saw the rock to which Andromeda was chained, when they delivered her to the sea monster; and adds, that Andromeda lived before the flood. With equal gravity he speaks of a lady, who had been transformed into a serpent, or dragon, by a goddess called Diana, and was then confined in a dungeon, in the island of Cyprus, if I mistake not.* He does not say, that he saw this lady; but he mentions it as a fact, which

* I write from memory; not having the book at hand, nor knowing at present where to find it.

he had heard; and he seems not to disbelieve it. He speaks too of a nation of men fifty feet high, who inhabited an island in the East Indies, and of another race of mortals, who had their eyes in their shoulders: and all this, and much more, of the same kind, he appears to have credited, merely because he had been so informed. There is reason to think, that Caxton, one of the first English printers, mistook a French translation of Virgil's Eneid for a true history; if he did not use the word *history* in a sense different from what it now bears. Nay, a Swedish navigator, who lived not two hundred years ago, has affirmed, that in the islands of Nicobar, in the gulf of Bengal, he discovered a race of men, with long tails, like those of cats. The islands of Nicobar, and their inhabitants, are now well known to Europeans; but the cats' tails are no where to be found.

While the ignorance and credulity of this western world were so great, we may well suppose, that, in their histories (if they had any) little regard would be paid to truth; and none at all to probability, or even to possibility, in their fables. In fact, the first productions in the way of romance, that appeared in Europe, were in the highest degree extravagant.

But other causes, besides the credulity and ignorance of the times, conspired to give a peculiar cast of wildness to those performances, and make them totally unlike every thing of the kind, which had hitherto occurred to human fancy. To explain these causes, it will be proper to give a brief account of that form of policy, which was introduced by the northern nations, who overran the Roman empire; and which is commonly called the feudal government. It has been described at large by many eminent writers. I shall enter into the subject no further, than is necessary to connect and illustrate my reasoning. This government it was, that, among many other strange institutions, gave rise to chivalry: and it was chivalry, which gave birth and form to that sort of fabulous writing, which we term *romance*.

The word is Spanish, and signifies the Spanish tongue: and the name is suitable enough to the nature of a language, whereof the greater part is derived from the ancient Latin or Roman. It seems, the first Spanish books were fabulous: and, being called Romance, on account of the tongue in which they were written, the same name was afterwards given, by the other nations of Europe, not to Spanish books, which is the

proper application of the term, but to a certain class of fabulous writings.

Some have thought, that the nations, who destroyed the Roman empire, were obliged to leave their own country, and establish themselves by force elsewhere; because at home their numbers were so great, that the soil was insufficient to support them. But this, I presume, is a mistake. Those northern regions, where the climate is inhospitable, may produce a hardy race of men, but cannot be supposed to produce them in very great numbers. In fact, the population in such countries has generally been found rather deficient, than excessive. I therefore think, that they left their native land, because it was uncomfortable; and because they had heard, that the conveniences of life were more easily obtained in the southern parts of the world. Accordingly, there is no evidence, that they sent out colonies, or that one part of the nation went in quest of settlements, while the other remained at home: it rather appears, that a whole people emigrated at once, men, women, and children; without any purpose to return.

One of their first expeditions that we read of, happened about the six hundred and fiftieth year of Rome; when the Cimbri and Teutones (who

are supposed to have come from Denmark, and the northern parts of Germany) invaded the Roman province with an army of three hundred thousand men, besides women and children, and were overthrown by Caius Marius, with prodigious slaughter. Their countrymen were more successful in the decline of the empire: and at length they wrested a great part of Europe out of the hands of the Romans; establishing themselves in the conquered provinces; the Franks and Normans in Gaul, the Goths and Vandals in Spain, and the Lombards in Italy.

There are, in the character of this extraordinary people, several particulars that deserve attention. We may call them one people, because a great similarity in manners, opinions, and government, prevailed among them; though they occupied many wide regions in the northern part of the continent of Europe.

First: They were a strong, hardy, and active race of men. This character they must have derived, in a great measure, from their climate and needy circumstances. Want is the parent of industry. To obtain even the necessaries of life, where the climate is cold, and the soil untractable, requires continual exertion; which at once inures the mind to vigilance, and the body to labour. The Germans, in Cesar's time, made it

their boast, that they had not been under a roof for fourteen years:* which conveyed such an idea of their ferocity and strength to the neighbouring Gauls, that they thought them invincible; and even Cesar found it difficult to persuade his Romans to march against them. Warm and fruitful countries generally produce (unless where a spirit of commerce and manufacture prevails) effeminacy and indolence: for there, neither art nor labour is necessary to procure what is requisite to life; and there, of course, both the mind and the body are apt to grow languid for want of exercise.

Secondly: They were fierce and courageous. This was owing, not only to their activity and necessitous life, but also, in part, to their religion; which taught them to undervalue life, and to wish rather to die in battle, or by violence, than in the common course of nature. For they believed, that the souls of those who fell in war or were put to death, had a better right than others to happiness in a future life; and passed immediately into the *hall of Odin* (so in latter times they called heaven), where they were to be regaled with feasting and festivity through innumerable ages. Agreeably to which opinion,

* Cæsar. Bell. Gall. i. 36.

in some of the nations adjoining to Hudson's bay, who are thought to be of the same race, it is still customary, for the old men, when they become unfit for labour, to desire to be strangled; a service, which they demand as an act of duty from their children; or, if they have no children, request, as a favour, of their friends.*

* "Are there not places," (says Mr. Locke, in the first book of his *Essay on Human Understanding*) "where "at a certain age men kill, or expose, their parents, "without remorse?" Taking for granted, that there are; his intention is, from this and other supposed facts of a like nature, to draw these inferences First, that there is no instinctive affection towards parents in the human constitution; that, independently on habits contracted by education, we should be as indifferent to the person whom we knew to be our father, or mother, as we are to any other man or woman; and that, if our teachers were to adopt a contrary plan of education, it would be not more difficult to make us hate our parents, because they are our parents, than it is to make us love them on that account. Secondly, and in general, that the same thing is true of every first principle, both moral and speculative, even of the κοιναι εννοιαι, that is, of the axioms of geometry, for so Euclid calls them: in other words, that all our ideas of duty, and of truth, would be just the reverse of what they are, if we were from the first told, that compassion (for example) and justice are criminal, and cruelty and treachery meritorious; that bodies are not as our senses represent them; and that

A third peculiarity in the character of these people is, their attention to their women. With

things equal to one and the same thing are not equal to one another. If this is not the intention of Locke's first book, his words and arguments are without meaning. It is true, he is there very full of words; and so inaccurate in the use of them, as well as superficial in examining the facts brought to confirm his theory, that we can readily believe, what he himself insinuates, that he sat down to write his book, before he had any distinct idea of what was to be in it.

But, passing this; let us consider, how far the fact hinted at in the quotation tends to prove, or to disprove, his general doctrine.

The fact is thus stated by a judicious traveller, Mr. Ellis, in his *voyage for the discovery of a northwest passage*. In some of the countries adjoining to Hudson's bay, "they have one custom, which is very extraordi-"nary: that when their parents grow so old, as to be "incapable to support themselves by their labour, they "*require* their children to strangle them; and this *is* "*esteemed an act of obedience* in the children to perform. "The manner of discharging this *last duty* is thus. The "grave of the old person being dug, he goes into it; "and, after having conversed, and smoked a pipe, or "perhaps drunk a dram or two with his children; the "old person signifies he is ready: upon which, two of "the children put a thong about his neck, one standing "on the one side, and the other opposite, and pull vio-"lently, till he is strangled; then cover him with earth, "and over that erect a kind of rough monument of

us, the two sexes associate together, and mutually improve and polish one another: but in

"stones. As for such old persons as have no children, "they *request this office from their friends;* though in this "last case it is not always complied with. These In- "dians" (we are told by the same author) "believe in "a Supreme Being infinitely good, and the author of "all their blessings; they believe also in an evil being, "of whom they are much afraid."

From this account we learn several things. 1. The parents are strangled by their own command, because they choose, it seems, to die in this manner: for old persons, when childless, solicit from others, as a favour, what they would have exacted from their children, as a duty. 2. Children would be thought undutiful to their parent, if they did not comply with his command in this particular. 3. This *last duty* is not performed without reluctance; for they, who do not think themselves bound by the ties of blood, are unwilling, and sometimes refuse, to perform it. 4. The old person dies with composure, and even with festivity, as well as of choice: which is a proof, that by such a death he hopes to escape some great evil, or secure some important good. To which I may add, that such a practice could not become general, and continue from age to age, unless with the consent of the persons who suffer. Young people there, as in other countries, have the view of becoming parents, and of growing old, in their turn; and would never set the example, if they were under any apprehension in regard to its consequences.

Does this fact, then, prove, that those poor barbarians

Rome and Greece they lived separate; and the condition of the female was little better than

are destitute of filial affection? It proves just the contrary. The children comply with the parent's command, because they love him, and think it their duty to obey him: and they do nothing to him, but what, if in his circumstances, they would wish to be done to themselves.

If a teacher were to say, "Ye children, afflict and "torment your parents, and, when they are old, put "them to death; for to them ye owe your life, and "many of its most important blessings:" he would hardly obtain a second hearing: the absurdity of the speech would be evident to every rational creature. But if his address were in these terms; "Children owe gra-"titude and obedience to their parents: let them, there-"fore, when a parent grows old, wishes to be at rest, "and requires them to put an end to his sufferings, do "as they are commanded: for thus shall they recom-"mend him to the favour of the good deity, and satiate "all the malevolence of the evil one:" such an address to credulous and pagan barbarians might not perhaps appear absurd. And yet their acquiescence in it would not prove them destitute of natural affection, or of moral sentiment; nay it would prove that they were possessed of both: for otherwise, how could they receive the one doctrine, and reject the other?

This note is already too long: and yet I think I shall not be blamed for subjoining, in honour of human nature, another extract from Mr. Ellis's book: that ingenious work being now (I know not for what reason) very rare.

slavery; as it still is, and has been from very early times, in many parts of Asia, and in Eu-

"The Indians adjoining to Hudson's bay, except "when intoxicated with brandy, are very courteous "and compassionate, even to those who are absolute "strangers, as well as to their own family: and their "affection for their children is singularly great. An "extraordinary instance of this happened lately at York "fort. Two small canoes, passing Hayes's river, when "they had got to the middle of it, one of them, which "was made of the bark of a birch tree, sunk, in which "was an Indian, his wife, and child. The other canoe, "being small, and incapable of receiving more than one "of the parents and the child, produced an extraordi-"nary contest between the man and his wife: not but "that both of them were willing to devote themselves "to save the other; but the difficulty lay in determining "which would be the greatest loss to the child. The "man used arguments to prove it more reasonable that "he should be drowned, than the woman. But she al-"leged that it was more for the child's advantage, that "she should perish; because he, as a man, was better "able to hunt, and consequently to provide for it. The "little time there was still remaining was spent in "mutual expressions of tenderness; the woman strongly "recommending, as for the last time, to her husband, "the care of her child. This being done, they took "leave in the water; the woman, quitting the canoe, "was drowned; and the man with the child got safe "ashore; and is now taken much notice of by the peo-"ple thereabouts. It appears upon the whole, that the

ropean and African Turkey. But the Gothick warriours were in all their expeditions attended by their wives; whom they regarded as friends and faithful counsellors, and frequently as sacred persons, by whom the gods were pleased to communicate their will to mankind. This in part accounts for the reverence wherewith the female sex were always treated by those conquerors: and, as Europe still retains many of their customs, and much of their policy, this may be given as one reason of that polite gallantry, which distinguishes our manners, and has extended itself through every part of the world that is subject to European government.* Another thing remarkable in the Gothick nations, was an invincible spirit of liberty. Warm and fruitful countries, by promoting indolence and luxury, are favourable to the views of tyrannical princes; and commonly were in ancient, as many of them are in modern times, the abode of despotism. But the natives of the

"single object in view was the preservation of the "child." Parental love and filial regard are not always proportioned to each other: yet, where the former is so strong, it cannot be supposed that the latter will be preternaturally weak.

* See essay on laughter and ludicrous composition, chap. iv.

north, more active and valiant, are for the most part more jealous of their privileges. Exceptions may be found to all general theories concerning the influence of climate in forming the human character: but this will be allowed to have been true of the ancient Germans, and those other nations, whereof I now speak. All the Gothick institutions were, in their purest form, favourable to liberty. The kings, or generals, were at first chosen by those who were to obey them: and though they acknowledged, and indeed introduced, the distinction of superiour and vassal, they were careful to secure the independence, and respective rights of both, as far as the common safety would permit. To them there is reason to believe that we are indebted for those two great establishments, which form the basis of British freedom, a parliament for making laws, and juries for trying criminals, and deciding differences.

These four peculiarities, in the character of the northern conquerors, it will be proper to keep in mind; that we may the better understand some things that are to follow. They were bold and hardy: they despised death, or rather, they thought it honourable and advantageous to fall in battle: they were indulgent and respect-

ful to their women: and they were animated with a spirit of liberty and independence.

When they left their own country to go in quest of a better, it is probable they made choice of the general and other officers who were to command them. They were volunteers in the service; and they served without pay, or at least without any pecuniary acknowledgment. All the recompense they looked for, was to have a share in the lands of such countries as they might conquer. No other indeed could have been given them, as their commander had no money to bestow; nor can we conceive, how he could have forced them into the service, if they had been unwilling.

Suppose them now to have conquered a country. To exterminate the natives, seems not to have been their intention:* they only wished to

* That no instance of extermination took place, during the period of Gothick conquest, cannot be affirmed, if we admit the testimony of contemporary historians. Several instances might have happened; and other horrid deeds, whereof there is no record, must have been perpetrated, while so many violent and extensive revolutions were going on. In regard to the character of the northern invaders, authors are not agreed: some look upon them as barbarians of the worst kind; many judge more favourably, both of their policy, and of their manners. It was natural enough for the writers of that time

settle among them, to introduce their own customs and form of government, and to have the

to think and speak of them with the utmost abhorrence, and rather to magnify the calamities that were before their eyes, than to describe things impartially. Several circumstances incline me to believe, that the sufferings of the vanquished, though they must have been great, were not so dreadful, as some learned writers imagine. I confine myself to one particular, which is connected with a subject that I have elsewhere touched upon.

If *we* were to be exterminated by a race of men, whose language was totally different from ours, would not our language be exterminated too? Can it be supposed, that the speech of our conquerors would undergo any material alteration from the English, which, without understanding it, they might have heard during the war, or which might still be muttered in obscure corners by a few of our surviving countrymen, who had escaped from the general massacre, and were suffered to remain in their own land, because too inconsiderable to provoke expulsion? In such a case, it seems probable, that the language of the country would be altogether changed, and that in this, as in every thing else, the conquerors would give the law. But if Britain were now to be subdued by a people of a strange tongue; and if, after the lapse of a thousand years, the British language should bear such a resemblance to the English now spoken, as the Italian and Spanish bear to the Latin; would it not be reasonable for our successours of that remote period to conclude, that the invaders of the eighteenth century must have been but few in pro-

territory, or as much of it as they might have occasion for, at their disposal. The land they

portion to the number of those among whom they established themselves; and that, therefore, though they became masters of the country, they did not extirpate the people?

In Gaul, in Spain, and in Italy, the Roman tongue was generally spoken at the time of the Gothick invasions; not pure, we may well imagine, in the remoter parts especially, but with such debasements, as it is natural for provinces, at a considerable distance from the seat of empire, to adopt in the course of two or three hundred years. And yet, notwithstanding these debasements with those additional barbarisms introduced by the Franks, Vandals, Lombards, &c. the languages now spoken in France, Spain, and Italy, are so like the ancient Latin, and one another, that any person who understands one of them may guess at the meaning of hundreds and thousands of words in each of the rest. In fact, though many changes have been made with regard to syntax, inflection, articles, and other things of less moment, these languages may all be said to be composed of the same materials. Of the Italian, in particular, an author, who must be allowed to be a competent judge, declares, that, though very many barbarous and northern words have been brought into it, one might form, not a discourse only, but an entire and large volume of good Italian, wherein not a single word or phrase should be admitted, that did not derive its origin from the Latin writers. Tutto che non si possa negare, che sianvisi aggiunte moltissime voci barbare,

considered as their property; and presented, as a voluntary gift, to their sovereign or commander,

ed oltramontani, io sono certissimo altresì, che potrebbe formare, non dico un discorso, ma un intero e grosso volume in buon Italiano, senza che vi entrasse pure una sola parola, o frase, di cui non si trovasse l'origine negli scrittori Latini. *Le vicende della Letteratura. Cap.* 4.

Next to the Italian, the Spanish and Portuguese bear the greatest resemblance to the Latin; although they suffered alteration, not only from the northern invaders, but also from the Moors, who conquered Spain in the eighth century, and were not finally driven out of it, till the fifteenth. If these languages, after all, lost so little of their primitive form, how inconsiderable must have been the number of the victorious Goths and Vandals, when compared to that of the people whom they subdued, and among whom they settled!

The Saxons, who established themselves in England, seem to have been more intent upon extermination, than any other of those adventurers. The British language they extirpated from all the provinces that fell into their hands, and planted their own in its stead; which they could hardly have done if they had not destroyed the greater part of the people. And to this day, the English and lowland Scotch dialects are called *Sassonich* or Saxon, by the highlanders of North Britain, and do indeed partake more of that tongue, than of any other. By the Norman conquest many French words were brought in, but the foundation and fabrick of the language were not materially affected.

on condition of his dividing it among them, on certain terms, and according to a plan, which, though perhaps not well refined in the beginning, came at last to be what I am going to describe.

He first appropriated a part of the conquered territory to his own use; for the maintenance of his household, and the support of his dignity. This was afterwards called the crown lands, and the royal demesnes. The rest he divided among his great officers, allotting to each a part. The officer held this property, on condition of professing loyal attachment to his sovereign, and serving him in war, at his own charges. He who conferred the property was called the superiour; and, he who received it, the vassal: who, on being invested, swore fealty or allegiance to his superiour, and on his bended knees did him homage, by declaring himself his *man*, *homo;* whence came the barbarous Latin word *homagium*, and the English term *homage*. If afterwards he proved unfaithful, or abandoned his lord in battle, or refused to serve him in war when regularly summoned he forfeited his land, and the superiour might either retain it, or give it to another. The land thus granted was called a *fief*, in Latin, *beneficium;* and this sort of tenure was termed a *feud*, or *feod*, from two Norse

words, *fee* signifying *reward*, and *odh*, *property*:* an appellation, which implied, that the land was indeed the property of the vassal, but that he derived it from the superiour, and held it, on condition of rendering personal service, by way of reward or recompense. And hence, the form of government introduced by these northern nations is called the feudal government, and the laws peculiar to that form are called the feudal laws.

Be careful not to confound this with another English term of the same sound and letters, *feud*, which denotes contention, or quarrel: the one is a simple term of Saxon original; the other is compounded, and derived, as above, from another language.

As the vassal's property was *feudal*, that of the sovereign, who held of no superiour, was called *allodial*, from *all*, *totum*, and *odh*, *property;* to intimate, that it was wholly his own, and that he owed no reward nor acknowledgment to any person for it. A sovereign might indeed be feudatory to another sovereign for certain lands or provinces; but, in regard to these, the feudatory was a vassal, and obliged to do homage to his superiour: as we find that the kings of Scotland

* Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England. Book ii. c. 4.

often did, for some of their southern territories, to the kings of England; and the kings of England to the kings of France for some of their foreign dominions.

In conformity to the feudal institutions and language, our law still supposes every tenure in land, pertaining to a subject, to be derived either from another subject, or from the sovereign. But, in this last case, the tenure is really allodial; for those lands are said to hold of the crown, which do not hold of any subject.

They who derived their tenures immediately from the sovereign, came, in process of time, to be the barons, thanes, lords, or nobility, of a feudal kingdom. They had, all of them, castles, and kept a court, and a retinue, resembling that of the monarch: and each of them within his own territory, had great power, and possessed many of the privileges of royalty; as the right of conferring certain dignities, of coining money, and of pardoning criminals.

The state of a feudal lord resembled that of his sovereign in other respects. He retained part of his territory in his own hands, for the support of his dignity and household; and the rest, with consent of the king, he divided among his own vassals, according to the same feudal tenure, by which he himself held his lands of the sovereign.

The secondary vassals were afterwards known, in some countries, by the name of armigeri, or esquires; which in the orignal signification denoted armourbearers, or bearers of shields. On being invested with their respective fiefs, they did homage to their immediate superiour, swore allegiance to him, and promised at their own charges to attend him in war, when summoned for that purpose. They, like their superiours, the great barons, had jurisdiction within their own territories; and, in the economy of their household, would no doubt imitate them, as far as they were able.

The secondary barons, like the primary, had their vassals, to whom they gave lands on the same feudal conditions: and by whom they were served and attended in war, even as they themselves served and attended the nobility, and the nobility the king. In times of peace, and when military attendance was not required, the lowest order of vassals would sometimes make a payment of corn, cattle, or money, in return for their lands; and this in time became general, and was the origin of rents.

A feudal kingdom, thus established, resembled, as an elegant author observes,* the encamp-

* Robertson's History of Scotland. Book. i

ment of a great army: and no form of policy could be better contrived, for securing a conquest. Military service being the chief part of the duty which the vassal owed his lord, and being equally the business of men of all ranks, we may conclude, that the whole nation must have been trained to arms: which would thus come to be considered as the most honourable, and, for a man of any rank, the only honourable profession. If to this we add the natural ferocity of the people, and their high spirit of independence, we shall be at no loss to account for that passionate love of warlike enterprise, which diffused itself throughout all the members of the feudal system. A people, thus arranged, prepared, and animated, was at all times ready to appear in arms, when summoned by the sovereign; who would instantly be attended by the greater barons his vassals, and they by their vassals, and so downward.

I hinted, that the whole nation was trained to the use of arms. In the beginning it would probably be so: but, when the Gothick system had been for some time established, this was not the case. All the free men, indeed, were warriours; but the lower sort of people, who supplied their betters with food, clothes, armour, and other necessaries, had not that honour, and were in

fact no better than slaves, though all were not equally servile.

For a nation, when once conquered, and subjected to this form of policy, it was scarce possible to throw off the yoke, or even attempt to regain their freedom. The truth is, that the vanquished soon came to incorporate with the victors; who seemed, when they made their first appearance in the southern parts of Europe, to found their political ideas on the natural equality of mankind.

What passes for the history of those dark ages is in many particulars little better than conjecture. It is however certain, that the feudal plan of subordination became at length almost universal in Europe. Those islands and provinces, that had not been conquered, or invaded, by the northern warriours, found their account in adopting it: partly, no doubt, from a desire to imitate the rest of the world; and partly too, that they might, by establishing the same military arrangements, acquire the same military vigour, and be able to maintain independency in the midst of their warlike neighbours. The feudal system, in its full extent, was not brought into England, till the conquest by William duke of Normandy; who imported it from his own country, where it had been long established; and introduced it into

the southern part of this island, with the consent of the great council of the nation. At what time it came into Scotland, is not yet, so far as I know, determined among antiquaries. But that it was adopted by the Scots, and maintained its influence longer in North, than in South Britain, is well known."*

Every human institution is liable to change. And no form of government has hitherto been devised, that is not obnoxious to alteration from a thousand causes, which human laws cannot prevent, because human wisdom cannot foresee. The feudal system soon became different from what it had originally been. While people are in needy circumstances, they have not the same views of things which they afterwards come to have, when settled in the secure enjoyment of riches and honour. The feudal king or commander was at first elective; and the fiefs granted by the superiour to his vassal were but for life, or during pleasure. But both the sovereign power, and the right of the feudatory, were in time made perpetual in the same family, and descended from the father to the son, or to the nearest relation. The nobles grew proud and ambitious, in proportion as they became independent. In some

* See Robertson's History of Scotland. Book. i.

cases, their fiefs were still secured by entails; which put it in the power of their posterity to enlarge, but not diminish the inheritance. Nay, at last, the son, whether worthy or unworthy, was allowed to possess those titles of honour, which the merit of his father had obtained from the sovereign: and thus the dignities, as well as lands, of the feudal baron, became hereditary. And, what is still more singular, though great abilities are requisite to qualify one for the great offices of state, and though nothing can be more absurd, than to bestow an office of difficulty upon a person who is unfit for it; yet many of the feudal nobles, by force of importunity, or as a reward for particular services, obtained the high privilege of having certain great and lucrative posts annexed to their respective families.

These corruptions of the old feudal system were gradually introduced, in consequence of the aspiring genius of the nobles, and want of power in the kings. The lands of the former were honoured with privileges, that allowed an extensive, and something even of royal, authority, to the proprietor. Before him, or judges appointed by him, all causes, civil or criminal, were tried, which concerned any of his vassals: and if the vassal of a baron was summoned before any of the king's courts, the lord of that vassal might

refuse to give him up, reserving to himself the right of trying him; and might even punish his vassal, if he submitted to any other jurisdiction, than that of his immediate superiour. Thus, it is easy to see, that the influence of the crown would be very weak, except within the king's own territory: and that contests would take place between him and his nobles, wherein the latter might have the advantage. And hence, a wealthy baron, who had a great number of dependants, might vie, in the splendour of his economy, even with the sovereign himself, and learn to set him, and his power, at defiance: whence would arise insolent demands from the nobles, and meanspirited concessions on the part of the king. In fact, the history of modern Europe contains, for several ages, little more, than a detail of dissensions between the kings and their nobility. For, in process of time, the power of the feudal barons, increased by legacies, lucrative marriages, and imprudent concessions from the crown, became offensive, and even intolerable, to their sovereigns: who were thus obliged, in self-defence, to devise expedients for checking that ambition, which gave them so much uneasiness. Some think, that the crusades took their rise from this principle.

The crusades were military expeditions into Palestine, undertaken by the christian princes

of Europe, with a view to exterminate, as they pretended, from the Holy Land, those Turks and Saracens, who were then in possession of it. For they gave out, that it was a reproach to christendom, to permit infidels to live and reign in a country, which in ancient times, belonged to the posterity of Abraham, and had been honoured with the presence of our Saviour, while he sojourned among men. These warlike enterprises, warranted and encouraged by the pope, were well suited to the enthusiastick valour of the feudal times, as well as to the religious opinions that prevailed while popery and ignorance were universal in the western world. The nobility and people, therefore, engaged in them with eagerness. They believed, that they should perform an acceptable service to God, by destroying, or at least by conquering, the enemies of the christian faith; and that the reward of their labour would be military renown in this life, and a crown of glory in the next. The pope claimed, and was allowed to have, power to remit the sins of the whole world: and a general remission of sin, together with many advantages of a secular nature,* was offered to all who would inlist in those armaments.

* See Robertson's History of Charles V. vol. i. page 240.

But whatever the opinions might be of those who were to serve in the holy wars, as they were called, we may, without breach of charity, conclude, that the princes, who planned them, were actuated no less by political, than by religious motives. They found their nobility turbulent at home; and were happy to engage them in foreign expeditions, from which it was probable, that the greater part would never return. The expedition was called a crusade, or croisade, from a Latin, or from a French, word signifying *a cross;* which has in every age been an emblem of christianity, and which these adventurers, as the champions of the faith, bore in their standard, and impressed upon their armour.

The honours acquired by the heroes of the crusade were not inconsiderable: though attended with great expense, both of treasure, and of blood. They conquered Palestine, and drove the Saracens out of it: and Godfrey of Bologne, or Bouillon, was actually crowned king of Jerusalem, about the year eleven hundred. Those who had distinguished themselves in these wars, expressed their achievements by some emblematical device, engraven, or painted, on their shield: and this is said to have been the origin of armorial ensigns; which, though they may now be purchased with money, were anciently attainable

by valour only. For the defensive armour then in use was of a particular kind, and quite different from that of the Greeks and Romans. The feudal baron cased his whole body in steel or brass: and the helmet was so contrived, as to cover upon occasion every part of his face, except the eyes; so that in the field he could not be known, but by the figures on his target, or by the make or colour of his arms. And by these the warriours of that time were often distinguished. Edward the black prince, a name famous in the English history, was so called from the colour of his armour, which is still preserved in the tower of London.

I said, that the figures, which the crusader displayed on his shield, were the origin of ensigns armorial. And this is the opinion of many authors: but it can be true of such figures only, as were according to the system of modern heraldry. For devices on shields are more ancient: witness the shield of Hercules by Hesiod; that of Achilles by Homer; and those of the *seven chiefs at Thebes* particularly described by Eschylus. Some fancy, that they are of still higher antiquity, and were known to Noah, Abraham, and Jacob; and that the twelves tribes of Israel were distinguished by their respective ensigns. But this is foreign from the present purpose.

That spirit of valour and religion, and that pas-

sion for travelling and strange adventures, to which the crusades were so favourable, gave rise to chivalry; which now began to appear in the world, and in time produced very important consequences, in politicks, in manners, and in literature. I am not ignorant, that some authors assign it an earlier date; and are rather inclined to derive the crusades from chivalry, than chivalry from the crusades. The dispute is not very material. Certain it is, that chivalry was first known about the time of the crusades; and that the romantick enthusiasm, wild fancy, and desperate valour, which characterized the knights who professed it, were much inflamed, and partly produced, by the reports then circulating through a credulous world, concerning the adventures that were believed to have befallen the heroes of the holy war.

The word *chivalry* is derived from the French *chevalier;* which, like the Latin *eques*, properly signifies a man who serves in war on horseback. As the poorer sort served on foot, *eques* in Latin, and *chevalier* in French, became titles of honour, corresponding nearly, but not perfectly, with the English term *knight*.

Chivalry was a military profession. The man, who wished to be distinguished in this way, dressed himself in a suit of the armour of that time;

and, girding on a sword, and grasping a spear, mounted his horse, and set out on some warlike enterprise. He could not, however, be considered as a complete cavalier, till he had received the honour of knighthood. This none can now confer, but a sovereign prince; but any man, who was himself a knight, could then confer it; and a sovereign would condescend to accept of it from the hands of a subject. The person, who was invested with this honour, received it on his knees; and many ceremonies, both warlike and religious, were performed on the occasion. There are several things remarkable in the character of the knights of chivalry; which may be partly accounted for, from the preceding observations.

1. The first is, their religious character. The authority of the church of Rome was then unbounded and universal in Europe; and the wars undertaken to rescue the Holy Land infused a religious enthusiasm into all who took part in those expeditions, that is, into every European, who aspired to military fame. Hence piety, as well as valour, was considered as indispensably requisite to form a gallant soldier. Some parts, too, of Europe, particularly Spain, had suffered from the invasion of Saracens and other infidel nations, who by their cruelty had rendered themselves, and their religion, objects of horrour to all chris-

tendom. When a knight, made captive by those unbelievers, was prevailed on, by threats, punishment, or exhortation, to abandon the true faith, he was branded among christians with the name of a recreant, that is, of an apostate knight: a term of the bitterest reproach. For every knight, at his installation, swore to maintain the catholick faith, in opposition to every danger. And therefore this term implied, in the language of chivalry, nothing less than an impious, perjured, and profligate coward.*

2. The second thing remarkable in the sons of chivalry, is their valour; and, I may add, their love of fighting. This they might have derived, as we have seen, from their Gothick progenitors; and this every feudal institution tended to encourage. This, by their expeditions against the infidels, was raised to a pitch of extravagance bordering on phrensy; and was further cherished by those private broils, wherein the feudal nobility were, from the nature of the government, and the ineffectual authority of the law, almost continually engaged. The very sports of those warlike barons were attended with bloodshed: for then, on solemn festivals, and when people met together to be merry, tilts and tournaments, and

* Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance.

other forms of single combat, were exhibited, for the entertainment of kings, and lords, and even of ladies. † And these encounters were by no means mock battles. The knights, fixing their lances, with the points advanced, made their horses run violently together; and both knight and horse were often overturned by the shock, and sometimes killed. If they survived the first assault, which was generally the case, they attacked each other with their swords, till one of them fell, or owned himself vanquished, or till they

† Tilts and tournaments, however, ought not to be looked upon, as unnatural expedients of a barbarous and bloody policy. In their first institution, they were not only rational, but wise: "because of singular use to in- "struct the nobility and gentry, who formed the cavalry "of those days, in the dexterous management of their "horses and arms." So says the great historian, upon the authority of writers who lived in the age of tournaments. And he subjoins the following pertinent remark. "Indeed, all nations, desirous to excel in war, have en- "deavoured to render their publick diversions condu- "cive to that purpose," (that is, to military discipline;) "a policy, which seems to be too much forgotten at "this time, in this kingdom." *Lord Lyttleton's Notes on the fifth book of his History of the age of Henry the Second.* That single combat was an amusement of heroes in the days of Homer, we learn from the funeral games in honour of Patroclus.

were parted by the officer, who presided at the ceremony. Audemar de Valentia, earl of Pembroke, was killed in one of those encounters, on the very day of his marriage. The mode of fighting at that time, as well as in ancient Greece and Italy, had, no doubt, some influence upon the valour of the combatants, or made them at least more eager to display it. With us, by means of fire-arms, the weakest man is a match for the strongest: and all that our soldiers have to do, is to show their contempt of danger, presence of mind, and regard to discipline. But, before the invention of gunpowder, a warriour who slew his enemy, gave proof, not of valour only, but also of strength, and of address in the use of his weapons

3. Their passion for strange adventures is another trait in the character of the knights of chivalry. The world was then little known, and men (as I observed before) were ignorant and credulous. Strange sights were expected in strange countries; dragons to be destroyed, giants to be humbled, and enchanted castles to be overthrown. The caverns of the mountains were believed to be inhabited by magicians; and the depth of the forest gave shelter to the holy hermit, who, as the reward of his piety, was supposed to have the gift of working miracles. The demon yelled in

the storm, the spectre walked in darkness, and even the rushing of water in the night was mistaken for the voice of a goblin. The castles of the greater barons, reared in a rude but grand style of architecture; full of dark and winding passages, of secret apartments, of long uninhabited galleries, and of chambers supposed to be haunted with spirits; and undermined by subterraneous labyrinths as places of retreat in extreme danger; the howling of winds through the crevices of old walls, and other dreary vacuities; the grating of heavy doors on rusty hinges of iron; the shrieking of bats, and the screaming of owls, and other creatures, that resort to desolate or half-inhabited buildings: these, and the like circumstances, in the domestick life of the people I speak of, would multiply their superstitions, and increase their credulity; and, among warriours, who set all danger at defiance, would encourage a passion for wild adventure, and difficult enterprise.

Consider, too, the political circumstances of the feudal barons. They lived apart, in their respective territories, where their power was like that of petty kings; and in their own fortified castles, where they kept a train of valiant friends and followers: and, in the economy and splendour of their household, they imitated royal magnificence. An

offender, who had made his escape, either from the publick justice of his country, or from the vengeance of some angry chief, was sure of a place of refuge, if he could find admittance into the castle of any other lord. Hence public justice was eluded, and the authority of the law despised: and a wicked and powerful baron, secure within his own castle, would even defy the power of the sovereign himself, or perhaps with hostile intention meet him in the field at the head of an army of determined followers. William earl of Douglas was generally attended, on solemn occasions, by a body of two thousand horse. Such a man it might be unsafe, even for a king, to provoke. As late as the reign of Mary queen of Scots, we read of a court of law held near the border of England; and are told, that the inhabitants of eleven counties were summoned by royal proclamation, to defend the persons of the judges, and enforce their decrees.*

Hence a conjecture may be formed of the distracted state of those feudal governments, in which the nobility had acquired great power, and high privileges. The most daring enormities were daily committed, to gratify the resentment, or the rapacity, of those chieftains: castles were

* Robertson's History of Scotland.

invaded, and plundered, and burned: depredations by the vassals of one lord were made upon the grounds and cattle of another; and horrid murders and other cruelties perpetrated. Rich heiresses, and women of distinguished beauty, were often seized upon, and compelled to marry the ravisher. Royalty itself was not secure from these outrages. When Eleanor queen of France was divorced from her husband Louis VII. she was, in her journey to her own hereditary dominions, waylaid by three princes, at three different places, each of whom intended to force her to marry him: but she escaped them all; and afterwards gave her hand to Henry the second, king of England.* Nay, in those days, there were outlaws and robbers, who, possessing themselves of mountains and forests, got together a little army of followers, and lived by rapine; while the power of the kingdom was employed in vain to dislodge, and bring them to justice. Such, in England, were the famous Adam Bell, and Robin Hood, and others who are still celebrated in ballads: and, even in the memory of persons now alive, there were some of the same profession remaining in the highlands of Scotland; but the race at last is happily extinct. In a word, the western

* Lord Littleton's Age of Henry II.

world was in those feudal times full of extraordinary events, and strange vicissitudes of fortune. And therefore we need not wonder, that a passion for adventures and warlike enterprise should have been universal among the knights of chivalry.

4. They were also distinguished by a zeal for justice: and, as the laws were so ineffectual professed to take up arms in vindication of the rights of mankind; to punish the oppressor; to set at liberty the captive; to succour the distressed damsel; and to rid the world of those false knights, who wandered about in armour, to accomplish wicked purposes. These were noble designs; and, while society was so insecure, and the law so openly violated, must have been attended with good effects. If you ask, how this heroick part of their character is to be accounted for; I answer, that they seem to have derived it, partly from their northern ancestors, who were lovers of liberty, and generous in their behaviour to the weaker sex; and partly from their attachment to the christian religion, whereof they were the declared champions, and which disfigured as it then was by superstition, would still be a restraint upon the passions of those who were willing to attend to its dictates.

Besides, the disorders of the time were so great,

that soberminded men, who were at all enlightened by knowledge, or capable of reflection, would see, that such an institution might be beneficial, and was become almost necessary to the existence of society. At first, perhaps, their views might reach no further than to defend the persons, and redress the grievances of their friends.* But the habit of doing this, and the honour acquired by it, would determine them to enlarge their plan, and form the generous resolution of patronizing mankind, by going through the world, to signalize their valour, in protecting the weak, and punishing the haughty. Their courage, their passion for adventures, their desire of seeing what was wonderful in foreign parts, and those hopes of future happiness, which religion taught them to entertain, conspired with their military genius, and with their sense of the evils to which they saw their fellow creatures exposed, to produce that extraordinary personage, a knight errant, or wandering knight: a character, which they who have read Don Quixote are apt to smile when they hear mentioned; but which, in its origin, was honourable to the warriours who bore it, and of no small advantage to the publick.

5. The fifth and last characteristick of chivalry,

* Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance

is the courtesy of the knights who professed it. I remarked, that the founders of the feudal system were distinguished, among all the nations then known in Europe or Asia, by the peculiarity of their behaviour to their women; whom they regarded and loved, as their friends, and faithful counsellors, and as invested with something of a sacred character. Accordingly we are told by some authors, that in all their conquests they were never guilty of violence where the female sex was concerned. This delicacy they transmitted to their descendants; among the greater part of whom, whatever outrages might now and then be committed by individuals, it seems to have been a point of honour, to be generous and respectful in their attentions to women. This was at least an indispensable part of the duty of a knight errant. By the statutes of chivalry, the love of God was the first virtue, and devotion to the ladies the second.* But that devotion had nothing licentious in it; being delicate to a degree that bordered on extravagance, if not on impiety. For the true knight did not expect condescension on the part of his mistress, till he had proved himself worthy of her, by deeds of arms, and performed many acts of heroism as her cham-

* Hurd's Letters.

pion and admirer. And, when he was going to attack his enemy, we are told it was customary for him, first, to implore the help of God, and then to invoke, or at least to mention, the name of his mistress.

The gallant behaviour of these knights may further be accounted for, from that religious ardour, which prompted them to signalize themselves as the champions of the faith, and to fulfil those duties of benevolence and kindness, which are no where so earnestly recommended as in the gospel, and which form the most substantial, and indeed the only substantial, part of true politeness.

The domestick life of the feudal baron must also have had considerable influence, in refining the manners of men and women in the higher ranks. He lived, as already observed, in his castle, with a numerous train of friends and vassals, who formed a court, similar in its economy to that of the sovereign. Luxury was little known at that time, even in palaces. The kings of England had their chambers littered with rushes; and their beds were laid on straw or hay. Every person of fashion in a great family has now a separate apartment; but then it was not so. The hall of the castle was a place of constant and universal resort. *

* "After having attended your lady in the morning," says troubadour Amanieu des Escas in his advice to a

There appeared the baron himself, with his lady and children, and those noble guests who might occasionally reside with him; there too were often seen his vassals, ranked according to their dignity; and there, in a lower situation, the chief servants of the family would sometimes assemble. Were so many persons of mean and of equal rank to meet together, every man would indulge his own humour, and politeness would not be much minded. But the very great diversity of ranks in a feudal castle would introduce courteous behaviour; while the great found it their interest, to be affable; and those of the lower sort, to be respectful. Think with what reverence the inferiour vassals would look up to the baron, who had so many men, and so much wealth, at his command; and who, within his own jurisdiction, could pardon, or put to death, and enjoyed many other privileges of royalty. The ladies of the family, conscious of their high rank, restrained by

gentlewoman, "you may walk in the great hall, and sa- "lute with civility those who pass there; answering "them in a courteous manner, but without exceeding in "talk. Be grave in your step, and modest in your look." *Mrs. Dobson's History of the Troubadours*, page 444. In those days, the upper servants in great houses were generally persons of family. By the common people in Scotland they are still called, *the gentlewoman* and *the gentleman*.

native modesty, and intimidated by the presence of their relations, would, in the midst of this great domestick assembly, maintain a reserve, sufficient to discourage all familiarity on the part of the other sex. Ladies of lower rank would imitate them: and thus it is reasonable to think, that there must have prevailed, and we have positive evidence, that there actually did prevail, among the women of fashion in those days, a dignity and even a stateliness, of manner, tending to inspire the enamoured beholder with a passion compounded of love and veneration. Hence the origin of romantick love: which, regarding its object as something more than human, forms extravagant ideas of perfection and happiness; a passion almost peculiar to latter times; and which, in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as in Asia, where the sexes lived separate, and where the condition of the female was little better than servitude, could have no place. For, if it be true, that a prudent reserve commands some degree of reverence; and that the best of humankind have blemishes, which at a distance are not seen, and which when near cannot be concealed; we need not wonder at the effects, said to have been produced, in courteous knights, by the sublime prudery of accomplished ladies; nor at the opposite tendency of these modes of life, by which men are emboldened to consider women as a

sort of property, and as rather under the standard of human excellence, than above it.

Politeness and courtesy take their rise among those who stand in awe of one another. For this reason, monarchy, where different ranks of men are established, has always been thought more favourable to elegant manners, than any of the republican forms of government, in which all the citizens are supposed to be equal, or nearly so. In his own court, that is, in his castle, the feudal baron was a monarch in miniature; and polite manners, like those that take place where kings have their residence, would naturally be diffused through his whole household. You easily know by one's behaviour, whether one has been much in the company of one's superiours. A man of spirit contracts no servility from that circumstance: but he acquires the habit of attending to the wants and wishes of those with whom he converses, of complying with their innocent humours, of adapting himself to their views of things, and their peculiar ways of thinking; and he also acquires the habits of unassuming speech, elegant phraseology, and easy motion. It has been remarked by several writers, that the true Scotch highlander is distinguished by a gentility of behaviour, which does not generally display itself in the lower ranks of mankind. The fact, I be-

lieve, is true; and may be accounted for, if not from the feudal, at least from the patriarchal, policy of the people; from the relation of clanship subsisting between the lord and his vassal, which entitles the latter to the company of the former, and occasions a more familiar intercourse, than is elsewhere met with, between the gentry and the commonalty. And therefore it is not surprising, that there should have been, notwithstanding the rudeness of the times, so much courtesy in the castle of a feudal baron; especially among those who appeared there in a military character, and still more especially among the knights of chivalry.

Besides, the character of a true knight was very delicate: and single combat was a thing so familiar to him, and withal accounted so honourable, that he never failed to resent in a hostile manner any reproachful word that might be thrown out against his virtue, particularly against his faith, or his courage. Hence reproachful words would in general be avoided; which would promote courtesy, by refining conversation. And hence the origin of duelling: a practice, unknown to Greece and Rome; which took its rise in the feudal times, and probably among the sons of chivalry; and which, though in many respects absurd and wicked, is allowed to have promoted

politeness, by making men cautious of offending one another.

The knight errant was the declared enemy of the oppressor, the punisher of the injurious, and the patron of the weak. And as women were more exposed to injury, than men; and as ladies of rank and merit were, for reasons already given, the objects of veneration to all men of breeding; the true knight was ambitious, above all things, to appear the champion of the fair sex. To qualify himself for this honour, he was careful to acquire every accomplishment that could entitle him to their confidence: he was courteous, gentle, temperate and chaste. He bound himself, by solemn vows, to the performance of those virtues: so that, while he acted with honour in his profession, a lady might commit herself to his care, without detriment to her character; he being, in regard to those virtues, as far above suspicion, as a clergyman is now. And, that women of fashion might confide in him with the more security, he commonly attached himself to some one lady, whom he declared to be the sole mistress of his affections, and to whom he swore inviolable constancy. Nothing is more ridiculous than Don Quixote's passion for Dulcinea del Toboso, as Cervantes has described it: and yet, it was in some sort

necessary for every knight errant to have a nominal mistress: because, if he had not acknowledged any particular attachment, nor made any vows in consequence of it, his conduct, where women were concerned might have been suspected; which would alone have disqualified him for what he justly thought the most honourable duty annexed to his profession. In a word, the chastity of a knight errant was to be no less unimpeachable, than the credit of a merchant now is, or the courage of a soldier.

I have endeavoured to trace out the distinguishing features of that extraordinary character, a knight errant; and to account for each of them, from the nature of the institution, and the manners of the times. The true knight was religious, valiant, passionately fond of strange adventures, a lover of justice, a protector of the weak, a punisher of the injurious; temperate, courteous, and chaste; and zealous, and respectful, in his attentions to the fair sex. And this is the character assigned him in all those old romances and poems, that describe the adventures of chivalry.

Knight errantry, however respectable in its first institution, soon became dangerous. The Gothick armour was a complete covering to the whole person: and under that disguise many warriours went through the world as knights er-

rant, who were really nothing better than robbers; and who, instead of being patrons of mankind, were pests of society. The true knight, therefore, thought himself bound in honour to inquire into the character of those who might appear in the same garb; so that two knights, who were strangers to each other, could hardly meet without fighting. And we may warrantably suppose, that even the better sort of these wanderers would sometimes attack an innocent man, without necessity, in order to signalize their valour, and do honour to the lady of their affections. Nay, in time it came to be a sufficient cause for combat, if the strange knight refused to acknowledge the beauty of his adversary's mistress superiour to that of his own. The law, therefore, would find it necessary to interpose; first, in subjecting chivalry to certain restraints, to which a knight would not willingly submit; and, at last, in declaring the profession itself unlawful. Before the publication of Don Quixote, knight errantry had been prohibited in several countries; and was indeed become unnecessary, from the alterations, that (as will appear in the next paragraph) had been gradually introduced into the feudal system; as well as inconvenient, from the absurd conduct of the knights themselves.

Of all those, who repined at the encroachments of the feudal barons, the kings of Europe were the most impatient, and indeed the greatest sufferers. They could summon their subjects in arms to the field; but having little to give them, could not easily keep them together for more than a few weeks. And, in time of peace, the royal power being almost confined to the royal territory, the greater barons were continually opposing the views of the sovereign, despising his authority, extorting from him new privileges, and counteracting the influence of the law. This was more or less the state of every feudal kingdom. The fashion of crusading was now over. And a feudal prince, unable to devise employment in foreign parts, for his turbulent nobility, was obliged, in self-defence, to exert all his power and policy, in controlling them at home; with a view to resume, if possible, some of those privileges that had been wrested from him. Many years were passed in struggles of this kind, between the kings and the nobles; to which nothing could put a period, but a change in the form of government. That happened in some countries sooner, and in others later: but the kings at length prevailed, and the feudal system was broken in pieces. Its

laws, however, and its manners, are still observable in every European kingdom.

As the power of the nobles was contracted, that of the kings became more extensive. This might be unfavourable to the independence, or rather to the licentiousness, of the grandees: but it promoted peace, and reestablished the authority of law. Society became more regular, and more secure. The knight errant was no longer of any use. He was even found troublesome; and the law considered him as a vagrant.

But the old spirit of chivalry was not extinguished: and what remained of it was inflamed by the books called romances, which were now common in Europe; and, being written in the vulgar tongues, and filled with marvellous adventures, could not fail to be eagerly sought after and read, at a time when books were rare, and men credulous.

To investigate all the causes that brought about the revival of letters, is now impossible. The ages immediately preceding this great event were profoundly ignorant; and few memorials of them remain. The crusades, bloody and unnatural as they were, seem to have given a new, and a favourable, impulse to the human soul. For the heroes of those wars, who lived to return home, brought along with them marvellous

accounts of Asia, and of the misfortunes, triumphs, and other adventures that had there befallen them. Thus, it may be supposed, that the imagination of Europeans would be elevated, their memory stored with new ideas, and their curiosity awakened. The human mind, thus prepared, naturally betakes itself to invention. Or if we believe the dawn of modern literature to have been previous to, or coeval with, the first crusade, it is not absurd to imagine, that the same spirit of activity, however raised, which made men think of signalizing themselves in feats of arms at home, or in quest of adventures abroad, might also stimulate the mental powers, and cause genius to exert itself in new ways of thinking, as well as of acting. The wars of Thebes and of Troy are undoubtedly to be reckoned among the causes that gave rise to the literature of Greece.*

* The crusades were in many other respects beneficial to Europe. They enlarged men's ideas of commerce, improved their taste, and refined their manners; and occasioned new distributions of property; whereby the sovereigns acquired greater power, the laws became more effectual, the aristocracy grew less formidable, and the people by degrees emerged into liberty. These causes, by a slow and almost imperceptible energy continued through several ages, brought on at last a total reformation of the feudal system.

Be this however as it will, certain it is, that, about the beginning of the twelfth century, or perhaps a little earlier, there appeared, in the country of Provence, a set of men, called TROUBADOURS, who are to be considered as the fathers of modern learning. That country, known of old by the name of *the Roman province*, is situated in a genial climate: and, from its vicinity to Marseilles, which was a Greek colony, and from having so long enjoyed the benefit of Roman arts and manners, we need not wonder, that, when all the rest of Europe was in a rude state, it should retain some traces of ancient discipline. An obvious advantage it must have had, in this respect, over Rome; owing to its distance from the seat of papal despotism: which in those days was friendly to ignorance; though in a later period, under Leo, it favoured the cultivation of arts and sciences.

The word *troubadour*, in its etymological sense, differs not much from the Greek word *poet;* the one denoting an *inventor*, and the other a *maker*. In Italian, *trovare* signifies *to find*, or *to invent; trovatore* is a *finder*, *inventor*, or *composer of poetry:* and *trovatore* and *troubadour* are plainly of the same origin. The troubadours made verses in the Provençal tongue; which (as might be conjectured from the situation of the country)

resembled partly the Italian, and partly the French, and is said to have had in it many Greek words and idioms, which it owed, no doubt, to the neighbouring city of Marseilles. It seems to have been the first modern tongue that was put in writing, or employed in composition. And the rank of some of those who composed in it (for many of the troubadours were princes*) and the wandering life which others of them led, made it quickly circulate through the western world.

The first poets of Greece sung their own verses: but the first Provençal bards only composed poems; leaving it to an inferiour order of men, called *jongleurs*, to sing them. This at least was the general practice: though occasionally, no doubt, the former might sing, and the latter compose. Both were inclined to a wandering life; but the singer more professedly than the poet; though they sometimes went in company. The

* Richard the first, king of England, and count of Poitou, was a generous patron of the troubadours, and at length came to imitate them with no bad success. Two of his poems, with some other Provençal pieces, are very well versified in a volume intitled RIMES, printed for Mr. Dilly 1781; in which volume there is great store of poetical ideas, expressed with strength, elegance and harmony.

jongleur studied to recommend himself by various arts; by playing on musical instruments, by imitating the songs of birds, by jumping through hoops, and by all sorts of legerdemain. Hence, probably, our word *juggler*.

No poets were ever held in higher esteem, than the troubadours. Raimond the fifth, count of Provence, exempted them from taxes. They went through many nations; and, wherever they went, they found patrons and pratronesses. The ladies were particularly ambitious of being celebrated by them; and would rather submit to be teased with the importunities of their love, than venture by rejecting them to incur their hatred: for as the troubadour was extravagant in panegyrick, he could be equally so in satire, when he thought himself affronted or despised. This passion for that sort of renown, which poets pretend to give, may be accounted for, perhaps, from the ignorance of letters, which then prevailed in all ranks, and especially among the fair sex. Bernard de Vantadour mentions it as one of the accomplishments of queen Eleanor, who was married first to Louis the seventh, of France, and afterwards to Henry the second, of England, that she could read.*

* Literary History of the Troubadours, page 12

Considering the gallantry of the times, and the attention paid to these poets by the ladies, it is natural to suppose, that love would be a chief theme in their compositions. And so in fact it was. But this love, though in some instances it might be genuine, had so much formality in it, that I can hardly believe it to have been any thing else, for the most part, than a verbal parade of admiration and attachment, in which the heart had little concern, and which aimed at nothing further, than to secure the protection of the fair and the noble. The Provençal poet went to the court of some prince or lord; where he was no sooner established, than he began to compose sonnets in praise of his patron's wife, and to feign, or to fancy, himself in love with her. This happened, not to one only, or to a few, but almost to the whole species of these adventurers; so that it would seem to have been the mode, and a thing of course. To unmarried ladies it does not appear, that much devotion was paid: I suppose, because they had little to bestow, in the way either of pecuniary, or of honorary, favour.

Petrarch's passion for Laura, though disinterested, seems to have been in some degree fictitious, or at least, not quite so serious a matter as many people imagine. "He was wretched to show he had wit," as the song says: he loved after the

Provençal fashion: he wanted to make passionate verses; and Laura, being a beautiful lady, and a married one too, with a pretty romantic name, suited his poetical purposes as well as Dulcinea del Toboso did the heroick views of Don Quixote. Had his heart been really engaged, he could not have gone on, from day to day, in the same strain of elegant and elaborate whining: a sincere passion would have allowed him neither time nor tranquillity for such amusement. What is observed, in the old aphorism, of violent grief, that it is silent, and of slight sorrow, that it vents itself in words, will be found to hold true of many of our affections. Hammond was not in love, when he wrote his elegies; as I have been informed on good authority: and Young, while composing the most pathetick parts of the Night Thoughts, was as cheerful as at other times. These are not the only instances that might be mentioned.*

* That Petrarch's passion was sincere, or such at least as gave him uneasiness for a considerable time, appears from a passage in an account of his life and character, written by himself in Latin prose and prefixed to an edition of his works printed at *Basil, apud Hen. Petr.* 1544. But that it was of that permament and overwhelming nature, which is generally supposed, may justly be doubted, upon the same authority. He was, he says, once violently in love, when a young man; but it was

The *cicisbeism*, as it is called, of modern Italy, (a sort of romantick attention paid to married women by those who should not pay it) I do not pretend to understand: though I believe it to be

amor honestus, an honourable, or a virtuous passion. Granting, that Laura (or Lauretta) the wife of Hugues de Sade was the object of it; and that the lover called it *honourable*, because it detached him from criminal connections; yet what evidence have we, that it continued with him (as some authors are pleased to affirm) to the end of his life? There is presumptive, nay there is positive, evidence of the contrary: and that he was less subject perhaps, than most men can pretend to be, to the tyranny of *the winged boy*.

The *presumptive* evidence is founded on the laborious life which he must have led in the pursuits of literature. His youth was employed in study, at a time when study was very difficult, from the want of books and of masters. He became the most learned man of his time. To him we are indebted for the preservation of some ancient authors, whom he is said to have transcribed with his own hand. His works, in my edition of them, fill one thousand four hundred and fifty folio pages closely printed; whereof the Italian sonnets are not much more than a twentieth part; the rest being in Latin; and one of his Latin pieces an epick poem called *Africa*, almost as long as the Eneid. Is it credible, that a man of extreme sensibility, pining in hopeless love for *thirty*, *forty*, or *fifty* years, could be so zealous a student, and so voluminous a composer? His retirement at Vaucluse was by no means

a disgrace to the country, not only as it tends to the utter corruption of manners; but also because it supplies a pretence for idleness, effeminacy, sauntering, gossiping, and insignificant prattle.

devoted to love and Laura. There, says he, almost all the works I have published, were completed, or begun, or planned; and so many they were, that even at these years they employ and fatigue me. Diverticulum aliquod quasi portum quærens, repperi vallem perexiguam, sed solitariam atque amœnam, quæ Clausa dicitur, quindecim millibus ab Avinione distantem, ubi fontium rex omnium, Sorga oritur. Captus loci dulcedine, libellos meos, et meipsum illuc transtŭli. Longa erit historia, si pergam exequi quid ibi multos ac multos egerim per annos. Hæc est summa, quod quicquid fere opusculorum mihi excidit ibi vel actum, vel cœptum, vel conceptum est: quæ tam multa fuerunt, ut usque ad hanc ætatem me exerceant ac fatigent. *Fr. Petrarcha; de origine sua, vita, et conversatione.*

The *positive* evidence we have in the following quotation from the same treatise; in the third sentence of which quotation, for a reason that will occur to the learned reader, I take the liberty to expunge two words, and put one in their place. Amore acerrimo, sed unico, et honesto, *in adolescentia* laboravi; et diutius laborassem, nisi jam tepescentem ignem mors acerba, sed utilis, *extinxisset.* Libidinum me prorsus expertem dicere posse optarem quidem, sed si dicam mentiar; hoc secure dixerim, me, quanquam fervore ætatis et complexionis ad id raptum, vilitatem illam tamen semper ani-

But if this fashion arose from the bewitching influence of Petrarch's poetry, which has been affirmed by some writers, and is not improbable, there may be reason to think, that at first it was rather a foolish, or at most a selfish, than a criminal, connection. Adelaide, viscountess of Baux, was extremely indulgent to the troubadour Peter Vidal, as long as his passion was merely poetical: but when he had the presumption to kiss

mo execratum. Mox vero *ad quadragesimum annum adpropinquans*, dum adhuc et caloris satis esset, et virium, non solum AMOREM, sed ejus memoriam omnem sic abjeci, quasi nunquam fœminam aspexissem. Quod inter primas felicitates memoror, Deo gratias agens, qui me adhuc integrum et vigentem, tam vili et mihi semper odioso servitio liberavit. Sed ad alia procedo.

Hieronymo Squarzafichi, in a life of Petrarch prefixed to the same collection of his writings, informs us, that the lady's real name was Lauretta, and that the poet made it Laura. Thus altered, it supplies him with numberless allusions to the laurel, and to the story of Apollo and Daphne. Might he not, in many of his sonnets, have had allegorical references to the poetical laurel; which was offered him at one and the same time by deputies from France and Italy, and with which he was actually crowned at Rome? In this view, his love of fame and of poetry would happily coincide with his tenderness for Laura, and give peculiar warmth and elevation to such of his thoughts as might relate to any one of the three passions.

her one day in her sleep, she drove him from her presence, and would never after, even at the request of her husband, be reconciled to him. Peter, finding her inexorable, went and fell in love with another lady, whose name happened to be *Wolf*, and, dressing himself in a skin of the animal so called, submitted to the danger of being hunted for her sake. In this garb he was discovered by the dogs; who, entering with great alacrity into the frolick, gave chase, pursued him to the mountains, and were actually worrying him, when he was with difficulty rescued by the shepherds.

Vidal, however, though fantastick in love, was not in every thing ridiculous. His advice to a jongleur is curious; and shows, that, though in those days there might be little learning in Europe, the principles of good breeding, and of elegant behaviour, were in some parts of it very well understood.*

* I beg leave to subjoin the concluding paragraph as a specimen of this excellent piece. "Never condemn "other jongleurs: those, who are severe on persons of "their own profession, show a base and envious mind, "and expose their own jealousy much more than the "faults of their brethren. If you are asked to relate what "you have seen and heard in the world, be not too diffu- "sive, but proceed by degrees; sound the disposition of

Love was not the only theme of the Provençal poets. They occasionally joined their voices to those of the pope, and the monks, and the kings of Europe, to rouse the spirit of crusading. Sa-

"your hearers, till you observe they relish your dis-
"course: then speak of the brave lords you have met
"with, and of the ladies in the highest esteem: and en-
"deavour to inspire those, who listen to you, with the
"love of virtue. If the company are persons of high rank,
"and of elevated minds, display, both in your counte-
"nance and voice, the eloquence which your subject
"inspires. Be distinct and grave in your manners; let
"your carriage be firm and graceful; and abstain from
"all mean and low expressions. Some jongleurs find
"fault with every thing, but take care to extol them-
"selves highly: and such is their vanity and ignorance,
"that were they in the presence of the king himself,
"they would affect the free and familiar tone of men of
"importance. Do not imitate those; the more they are
"known, the less they are esteemed. For your part,
"whatever is your genius, your knowledge, or your
"wit, do not make a boast of it: be modest, and you
"will find persons enough who will set forth your merit
"and abilities. Avoid all excess: flee all bad company;
"but do not appear to despise any one; for the meanest
"and the worst person is most able to become your
"enemy; and they sometimes pursue those they hate,
"with such inveterate malice, as to injure them in the
"opinion of the worthy and the judicious. While you
"are young and vigorous recommend in your writings,

tire, religious and political, as well as personal, and little tales or novels, with portions of real history, and even theological controversy, were also interwoven in their compositions. But in every form their poetry pleased; and, by the industry of those who composed, and of those who sung it, obtained a very extensive circulation.

A book, or a poem, in a living language, was at this period an extraordinary appearance. All Europe attended to it. The Provençal tongue, and mode of writing, became fashionable: and the neighbouring nations wished to know, whether their languages could not also be applied to the same, or to similar purposes.

This was first attempted with success in Italy; where several men of great genius happened about this time to arise, whose practice and authority fixed the Italian tongue in a state not very different from its present. Among these were Dante, Petrarch, and Boccacio: who all flourished in the end of the thirteenth century, or in the beginning of the fourteenth. Dante distinguished

" and impress by your behaviour, the respect due to old " age: And maintain continually this truth, that those, " who frequent the company of persons, whose lives " have been spent in virtue, will derive to themselves " a lasting blessing and reward." See Mrs. Dobson's Literary History of the Troubadours, page 338—349.

himself in poetry: and wrote his *Inferno*, *Paradiso*, and *Purgatorio*, in a bold, but extravagant style of fable: intermixing satire with his poetical descriptions and allegories; whereof many are highly finished, and in particular passages enforced with singular energy and simplicity of expression. Petrarch composed many poems, letters, essays, and dialogues, in Latin, which he thought the only durable tongue: for as to his Italian verses, he did not believe they could last, or be intelligible for a century. But in this he was mistaken greatly: his Latin works being now almost forgotten; while his Italian sonnets are still the admiration of Europe, for delicacy of sentiment, and elegance of style. Their merit was indeed thought to be so transcendent, that he alone was attended to, and his masters the troubadours were neglected and forgotten. Boccacio's chief performance is called the *Decameron*. It is a series of novels; whereof some are grave, others comical, and many indecent. He supposes a number of men and women met together, at the time when a pestilence was ravaging Florence, and telling those stories for their mutual amusement. His imagination must have been unbounded: and so highly is his prose esteemed in Italy to this day, that a late author of

that country* declares it to be impossible, for the man who has not read Boccacio, to form an idea of the extent or energy of the Italian tongue.

The fourteenth century produced also the illustrious Geoffry Chaucer; who, though not the first who wrote in English, is the first of our great authors, and may be truly called the father of our language and literature. His writings are chiefly translations, or imitations, of the Provençal and Italian writers then known. But he has imitated and translated with the greatest latitude, and added many fine strokes of character, humour and description: so that we ought to consider him as an original; since he does in fact exhibit, especially in his Canterbury Tales, a more natural picture of the English manners of that age, than is to be met with in any other writer. He did not, however, fix the English tongue, as his contemporaries Petrarch and Boccacio had fixed the Italian. Many of his words soon fell into disuse: and his language at present is not well understood, except by those who have taken some pains to study it. He died in the year fourteen hundred. Some of his poems, particularly his *Knight's Tale*, which is well modernized by Dryden, are written in the taste of chivalry; but

* Vicende della Litteratura, del C. Denina.

not in that extravagant mode of invention, which now began to display itself in the Spanish and French romances; and which was afterwards adopted, and adorned with every grace of language and of harmony, by Ariosto in Italy, and by Spenser in England.

The origin of the old romance, which, after this long historical deduction, we are now arrived at, has been already accounted for. It was one of the consequences of chivalry. The first writers in this way exhibited a species of fable, different from all that had hitherto appeared. They undertook to describe the adventures of those heroes who professed knight errantry. The world was then ignorant and credulous, and passionately fond of wonderful adventures, and deeds of valour. They believed in giants, dwarfs, dragons, enchanted castles, and every imaginable species of necromancy. These form the materials of the old romance. The knight errant was described as courteous, religious, valiant, adventurous, and temperate. Some enchanters befriended, and others opposed him. To do his mistress honour, and to prove himself worthy of her, he was made to encounter the warriour, hew down the giant, cut the dragon in pieces, break the spell of the necromancer, demolish the enchanted castle, fly through the air on wooden or winged horses; or,

with some magician for his guide, to descend unhurt through the opening earth, and traverse the caves in the bottom of the ocean. He detected and punished the false knight, overthrew or converted the infidel, restored the exiled monarch to his dominions, and the captive damsel to her parents: he fought at the tournament, feasted in the hall, and bore a part in the warlike procession: or, when the enchanter who befriended his enemy prevailed, he did penance in the desert, or groaned in the dungeon; or, perhaps, in the shape of a horse or hart, grazed in the valley, till some other valiant knight broke the spell, and restored to him his form, his arms, and his freedom. At last, after innumerable toils, disasters, and victories, he married his mistress, and became a great lord, a prince or perhaps an emperor.

It will appear, from this account, that nature, probability, and even possibility, were not much attended to, in those compositions. Yet with them all Europe was intoxicated: and in every nation that had pretensions to a literary character, multitudes of them were written, some in verse, and others in prose. To give a list is unnecessary, and would be tedious. Amadis de Gaul was one of the first; and is, in the opinion of Cervantes, one of the best. Several others are mentioned, and char-

acterized, by that excellent author, in his account of the purgation of Don Quixote's library.

While the taste continued for every thing that was incredible and monstrous, we may suppose, that true learning, and the natural simplicity of the classicks, would not be held in general estimation. Accordingly, though the knowledge of Greek and Latin was now advancing apace in the western world, Homer, Virgil, Cicero, and all the most elegant authors, were much neglected. The first accounts, that circulated among us, concerning the siege of Troy, seem to have been taken, not from Homer, but from Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, two writers in prose, who have given a fabulous and marvellous history of it: and, as late as the age of George Buchanan, our modern Latin poets, Vida excepted, were, if I mistake not, more ambitious to imitate Claudian, than Virgil, in their hexameters. Ovid, too, was a favourite author; partly on account of the astonishing fables of the *Metamorphoses*, and partly, no doubt, for the sake of his love verses, so well adapted to the gallantry of this period.*

* " To avoid the raillery of those who mock my use-
" less constancy, a thought occurs: I may feign, that I
" am favourably received, I shall be believed: for women
" are easily softened. *So says Ovid*, and all the gallant

The passion for romance was attended with other bad consequences. Men of warlike genius and warm fancy, charmed to infatuation with the supposed achievements of knights errant, were tempted to appear in that character; though the profession was now considered as a nuisance, and proscribed by law, in some parts of Europe. This folly seems to have been most prevalent in Spain: which may be thus accounted for. The first romances were written in the language of that kingdom. The Spaniards were then, as they are now, a valiant and enterprising people. And they had long been enslaved by the moors from Africa, whom, after a seven hundred years' war (according to the historians), and after, fighting three thousand and seven hundred battles, they at last drove out of Spain. This produced many wonderful adventures; made them fierce, romantick, and haughty; and confirmed their attachment to their own religion, and their abhorrence of that of their enemies.

But the final extirpation of chivalry and all its chimeras was now approaching. What laws and force could not accomplish, was brought about by the humour and satire of one writer. This was

" poets." This passage is found in Arnaud Daniel, a troubadour of the twelfth century. *Hist of Troub.* p. 215.

the illustrious Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. He was born at Madrid in the year one thousand five hundred and forty-nine. He seems to have had every advantage of education, and to have been a master in polite learning. But in other respects fortune was not very indulgent. He served many years in the armies of Spain, in no higher station than that of a private soldier. In that capacity he fought at the battle of Lepanto, under Don John of Austria, and had the misfortune, or, as he rather thought, the honour, to lose his left hand. Being now disqualified for military service, he commenced author; and wrote many dramatick pieces, which were acted with applause on the Spanish theatre, and acquired him both money and reputation. But want of economy and unbounded generosity dissipated the former: and he was actually confined in prison for debt, when he composed the first part of *The History of Don Quixote;* a work, which every body admires for its humour; but which ought also to be considered as a most useful performance, that brought about a great revolution in the manners and literature of Europe, by banishing the wild dreams of chivalry, and reviving a taste for the simplicity of nature. In this view, the publication of Don Quixote forms an important era in the history of mankind.

Don Quixote is represented as a man, whom it is impossible not to esteem for his cultivated understanding, and the goodness of his heart: but who, by poring night and day upon the old romances, had impaired his reason to such a degree, as to mistake them for history, and form the design of going through the world, in the character, and with the accoutrements, of a knight errant. His distempered fancy takes the most common occurrences for adventures similar to those he had read in his books of chivalry. And thus, the extravagance of those books being placed, as it were, in the same group with the appearances of nature and the real business of life, the hideous disproportion of the former becomes so glaring by the contrast, that the most inattentive observer cannot fail to be struck with it. The person, the pretensions, and the exploits, of the errant knight, are held up to view in a thousand ridiculous attitudes. In a word, the humour and satire are irresistible; and their effects were instantaneous.

This work no sooner appeared, than chivalry vanished, as snow melts before the sun. Mankind awoke as from a dream. They laughed at themselves for having been so long imposed on by absurdity; and wondered they had not made the discovery sooner. It astonished them to find, that

nature and good sense could yield a more exquisite entertainment, than they had ever derived from the most sublime phrensies of chivalry. For, that this was indeed the case, that Don Quixote was more read, and more relished, than any other romance had ever been, we may infer, from the sudden and powerful effect it produced on the sentiments of mankind; as well as from the declaration of the author himself; who tells us, that upwards of twelve thousand copies of the first part were sold, before the second could be got ready for the press: an amazing rapidity of sale, at a time when the readers and purchasers of books were but an inconsiderable number compared to what they are in our days. "The very children," says he, "handle it, boys read it, men "understand, and old people applaud, the per- "formance. It is no sooner laid down by one, "than another takes it up: some struggling, and "some entreating, for a sight of it. In fine," continues he, "this history is the most delightful, "and the least prejudicial, entertainment, that "ever was seen; for, in the whole book, there is "not the least shadow of a dishonourable word, "nor one thought unworthy of a good catholick."*

Don Quixote occasioned the death of the old romance, and gave birth to the new. Fiction

* Third volume of Don Quixote, near the end.

henceforth divested herself of her gigantick size, tremendous aspect, and frantick demeanour; and, descending to the level of common life, conversed with man as his equal, and as a polite and cheerful companion. Not that every subsequent romance writer adopted the plan, or the manner, of Cervantes: but it was from him they learned to avoid extravagance, and to imitate nature. And now probability was as much studied, as it had been formerly neglected.

But before I proceed to the new romance, on which I shall be very brief, it is proper just to mention a species of romantick narrative, which cannot be called either old or new, but is a strange mixture of both. Of this kind are the *Grand Cyrus*, *Clelia*, and *Cleopatra;* each consisting of ten or a dozen large volumes, and pretending to have a foundation in ancient history. In them, all facts and characters, real and fabulous; and all systems of policy and manners, the Greek, the Roman, the feudal and the modern, are jumbled together and confounded: as if a painter should represent Julius Cesar drinking tea with queen Elizabeth, Jupiter, and Dulcinea del Toboso, and having on his head the laurel wreath of ancient Rome, a suit of Gothick armour on his shoulders, laced ruffles at his wrist, a pipe of tobacco in his mouth, and a pistol and tomahawk stuck in his belt.

But I should go beyond my depth, if I were to criticise any of those enormous compositions. For, to confess the truth, I never had patience to read one half of one of the volumes; nor met with a person, who could give me any other account of them, than that they are intolerably tedious, and unspeakably absurd.

The new romance may be divided into the *serious* and the *comick:* and each of these kinds may be variously subdivided.

I. 1. Of *serious* romances, some follow *the historical arrangement;* and, instead of beginning, like Homer and Virgil, in the middle of the subject,* give a continued narrative of the life of some one person, from his birth to his establishment in the world, or till his adventures may be supposed to have come to an end; Of this sort is *Robinson Crusoe.* The account commonly given of that well known work is as follows.

Alexander Selkirk, a Scotch mariner, happened, by some accident which I forget, to be left in the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandes in the south seas. Here he continued four years alone, without any other means of supporting life, than by running down goats, and killing such other animals as he could come at. To de-

* Essay on Poetry and Musick. Part i. chap. 5.

fend himself from danger during the night, he built a house of stones, rudely put together, which a gentleman, who had been in it, (for it was extant when Anson arrived there) described to me as so very small, that one person could with difficulty crawl in, and stretch himself at length. Selkirk was delivered by an English vessel, and returned home. A late French writer says, he had become so fond of the savage state, that he was unwilling to quit it. But that is not true. The French writer either confounds the real story of Selkirk with a fabulous account of one Philip Quarl, written after Robinson Crusoe, of which it is a paltry imitation; or wilfully misrepresents the fact, in order to justify, as far as he is able, an idle conceit, which, since the time of Rousseau, has been in fashion amongst infidel and affected theorists on the continent, that a savage life is most natural to us, and that the more a man resembles a brute in his mind, body, and behaviour, the happier he becomes and the more perfect. Selkirk was advised to get his story put in writing, and published. Being illiterate himself, he told every thing he could remember to Daniel Defoe, a professed author, of considerable note; who, instead of doing justice to the poor man, is said to have applied these materials to his own use,

by making them the groundwork of Robinson Crusoe; which he soon after published, and which being very popular, brought him a good deal of money.

Some have thought, that a love tale is necessary to make a romance interesting. But Robinson Crusoe, though there is nothing of love in it, is one of the most interesting narratives that ever was written; at least in all that part which relates to the desert island: being founded on a passion still more prevalent than love, the desire of self-preservation; and therefore likely to engage the curiosity of every class of readers, both old and young, both learned and unlearned.

I am willing to believe, that Defoe shared the profits of this publication with the poor seaman: for there is an air of humanity in it, which one would not expect from an author who is an arrant cheat. In the preface to his second volume, he speaks feelingly enough of the harm done him by those who had abridged the first, in order to reduce the price. "The injury," says he, "which these men do to the *proprietors* of "works, is a practice all honest men abhor: and "they believe they may challenge them to "show the difference between that, and robbing "on the highway, or breaking open a house. "If they cannot show any difference in the

" crime, they will find it hard to show, why " there should be any difference in the punish- " ment." Is it to be imagined, that any man of common prudence would talk in this way, if he were conscious, that he himself might be proved guilty of that very dishonesty which he so severely condemns?

Be this however as it may, for I have no authority to *affirm* any thing on either side, Robinson Crusoe must be allowed, by the most rigid moralist, to be one of those novels, which one may read, not only with pleasure, but also with profit. It breathes throughout a spirit of piety and benevolence: it sets in a very striking light, as I have elsewhere observed, the importance of the mechanick arts, which they, who know not what it is to be without them, are so apt to undervalue: it fixes in the mind a lively idea of the horrours of solitude, and consequently, of the sweets of social life, and of the blessings we derive from conversation, and mutual aid: and it shows, how, by labouring with one's own hands, one may secure independence, and open for one's self many sources of health and amusement. I agree, therefore, with Rousseau, that this is one of the best books that can be put in the hands of children. The style is plain,

but not elegant, nor perfectly grammatical: and the second part of the story is tiresome.

2. A second species of the modern serious romance is that, which follows *the poetical arrangement;* and, in order to shorten the time of the action, begins in the middle of the story. Such, partly, are *Sir Charles Grandison*, and *Clarissa Harlowe*, by Mr. Richardson. That author has adopted a plan of narrative of a peculiar kind: the persons, who bear a part in the action, are themselves the relaters of it. This is done by means of letters, or epistles; wherein the story is continued from time to time, and the passions freely expressed, as they arise from every change of fortune, and while the persons concerned are supposed to be ignorant of the events that are to follow. And thus the several agents are introduced in their turns, speaking, or, which is the same thing in this case, writing, suitably to their respective feelings, and characters: so that the fable is partly epick, and partly dramatick. There are some advantages in this form of narrative. It prevents all anticipation of the catastrophe; and keeps the reader in the same suspense, in which the persons themselves are supposed to be: and it pleases further, by the varieties of style, suited to the different tempers and sentiments of those

who write the letters. But it has also its inconveniences. For, unless the fable be short and simple, this mode of narration can hardly fail to run out into an extravagant length, and to be incumbered with repetitions. And indeed, Richardson himself, with all his powers of invention, is apt to be tedious, and to fall into a minuteness of detail, which is often unnecessary. His pathetick scenes, too, are overcharged, and so long continued, as to wear out the spirits of the reader. Nor can it be denied, that he has given too much prudery to his favourite women, and something of pedantry or finicalness to his favourite men. Clementina was, no doubt, intended as a pattern of female excellence: but, though she may claim veneration as a saint, it is impossible to love her as a woman. And Grandison, though both a good and a great character, is in every thing so perfect, as in many things to discourage imitation; and so distant, and so formal, as to forbid all familiarity, and, of course, all cordial attachment. Alworthy is as good a man as he: but his virtue is purely human; and, having a little of our own weakness in it, and assuming no airs of superiority, invites our acquaintance, and engages our love.

For all this, however, Richardson is an author of uncommon merit. His characters are well

drawn and distinctly marked; and he delineates the operation of the passions with a picturesque accuracy, which discovers great knowledge of human nature. His moral sentiments are profound and judicious; in wit and humour he is not wanting; his dialogue is sometimes formal; but many of his conversation pieces are executed with elegance and vivacity. For the good tendency of his writings he deserves still higher praise; for he was a man of unaffected piety, and had the improvement of his fellow creatures very much at heart.

Yet, like most other novel writers, he represents some of his wicked characters as more agreeable than was necessary to his plan; which may make the example dangerous. I do not think, that an author of fable, in either prose or verse, should make his bad characters completely bad: for, in the first place, that would not be natural, as the worst of men have generally some good in them: and, secondly, that would hurt his design, by making the tale less captivating; as the history of a person, so very worthless as to have not one good quality, would give disgust or horrour, instead of pleasure. But, on the other hand, when a character, like Richardson's *Lovelace*, whom the reader ought to abominate for his crimes, is adorned with youth, beauty,

eloquence, wit, and every other intellectual and bodily accomplishment, it is to be feared, that thoughtless young men may be tempted to imitate, even while they disapprove, him. Nor is it a sufficient apology to say, that he is punished in the end. The reader knows, that the story is a fiction: but he knows too, that such talents and qualities, if they were to appear in real life, would be irresistibly engaging; and he may even fancy, that a character so highly ornamented must have been a favourite of the author. Is there not, then, reason to apprehend, that some readers will be more inclined to admire the gay profligate than to fear his punishment? Achilles in Homer, and Macbeth in Shakspeare, are not without great and good qualities, to raise our admiration, and make us take concern in what befals them. But no person is in any danger of being perverted by their example: their criminal conduct being described and directed in such a manner, by the art of the poet, as to show, that it is hateful in itself, and necessarily productive of misery, both to themselves, and to mankind.

I may add, that the punishment of Lovelace is a death, not of infamy, according to our notions, but rather of honour; which surely he did not deserve: and that the immediate cause of it

is, not his wickedness, but some inferiority to his antagonist in the use of the small sword. With a little more skill in that exercise, he might, for any thing that appears in the story, have triumphed over Clarissa's avenger, as he had done over herself, and over the censure of the world. Had his crime been represented as the necessary cause of a series of mortifications, leading him gradually down to infamy, ruin, and despair, or producing by probable means an exemplary repentance, the fable would have been more useful in a moral view, and perhaps more interesting. And for the execution of such a plan, the genius of Richardson seems to me to have been extremely well formed. These remarks are offered, with a view rather to explain my own ideas of fable, than to detract from an author, who was an honour to his country, and of whose talents and virtues I am a sincere admirer.

His epistolary manner has been imitated by many novel writers; particularly by Rousseau in his *New Eloisa;* a work, not more remarkable for its eloquence, which is truly great, than for its glaring and manifold inconsistencies. For it is full of nature and extravagance, of sound philosophy and wild theory, of useful instruction and dangerous doctrine.

II. 1. The second kind of the new romance is the *comick;* which, like the first, may, with re-

spect to the arrangement of events, be subdivided into the *historical* and the *poetical.*

Of the historical form are the novels of Marivaux, and *Gil Blas* by M. le Sage. These authors abound in wit and humour; and give natural descriptions of present manners, in a simple, and very agreeable, style: and their works may be read without danger; being for the most part of a moral tendency. Only Le Sage appears to have had a partiality for cheats and sharpers: for these are people whom he introduces often; nor does he always paint them in the odious colours, that properly belong to all such pests of society. Even his hero Gil Blas he has made too much a rogue: which, as he is the relater of his own story, has this disagreeable effect, that it conveys to us, all the while we read him, an idea that we are in bad company, and deriving entertainment from the conversation of a man whom we cannot esteem.

Smollet follows the same historical arrangement in *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle:* two performances, of which I am sorry to say, that I can hardly allow them any other praise, than that they are humourous and entertaining. He excels, however, in drawing the characters of seamen; with whom in his younger days he had the best opportunities of being acquainted. He

seems to have collected a vast number of merry stories; and he tells them with much vivacity and energy of expression. But his style often approaches to bombast; and many of his humourous pictures are exaggerated beyond all bounds of probability. And it does not appear that he knew how to contrive a regular fable, by making his events mutually dependent, and all cooperating to one and the same final purpose. On the morality of these novels I cannot compliment him at all. He is often inexcusably licentious. Profligates, bullies, and misanthropes, are among his favourite characters. A duel he seems to have thought one of the highest efforts of human virtue; and playing dexterously at billiards a very genteel accomplishment. Two of his pieces, however, deserve to be mentioned with more respect. Count Fathom, though an improbable tale, is pleasing, and upon the whole not immoral, though in some passages very indelicate. And Sir Launcelot Greaves, though still more improbable, has great merit; and is truly original in the execution, notwithstanding that the hint is borrowed from Don Quixote.

2. The second species of the new comick romance is that, which, in the arrangement of events, follows the poetical order; and which may properly enough be called the epick comedy,

or rather the comick epick poem: *epick*, because it is narrative; and *comick*, because it is employed on the business of common life, and takes its persons from the middle and lower ranks of mankind.

This form of the comick romance has been brought to perfection in England by Henry Fielding, who seems to have possessed more wit and humour,* and more knowledge of mankind, than any other person of modern times, Shakspeare excepted; and whose great natural abilities were refined by a classical taste, which he had acquired by studying the best authors of antiquity: though it cannot be denied, that he appears on some occasions to have been rather too ostentatious, both of his learning, and of his wit.

Some have said, that Joseph Andrews is the best performance of Fielding. But its chief merit is parson Adams; who is indeed a charac-

* The great lord Lyttleton, after mentioning several particulars of Pope, Swift, and other wits of that time, when I asked some question relating to the author of Tom Jones, began his answer with these words, "Henry "Fielding, I assure you, had more wit and more hu- "mour that all the persons we have been speaking of "put together." This testimony of his lordship, who was intimately acquainted with Fielding, ought not to be forgotten.

ter of masterly invention, and, next to Don Quixote, the most ludicrous personage that ever appeared in romance. This work, though full of exquisite humour, is blamable in many respects. Several passages offend by their indelicacy. And it is not easy to imagine, what could induce the author to add to the other faults of his hero's father, Wilson, the infamy of lying and cowardice; and then to dismiss him, by very improbable means, to a life of virtuous tranquillity, and endeavour to render him upon the whole a respectable character. Some youthful irregularities, rather hinted at than described, owing more to imprudence and unlucky accident than to confirmed habits of sensuality, and followed by inconvenience, perplexity, and remorse, their natural consequences, may, in a comick tale, be assigned even to a favourite personage, and, by proper management, form a very instructive part of the narration: but crimes, that bring dishonour, or that betray a hard heart, or an injurious disposition, should never be fixed on a character whom the poet or novel writer means to recommend to our esteem. On this principle, Fielding might be vindicated in regard to all the censurable conduct of Tom Jones, provided he had been less particular in describing it: and, by the same rule, Smollet's sys-

tem of youthful profligacy, as exemplified in some of his libertines, is altogether without excuse.

Tom Jones and *Amelia* are Fielding's best performances; and the most perfect, perhaps, of their kind in the world. The fable of the latter is entirely poetical, and of the true epick species; beginning in the middle of the action, or rather as near the end as possible, and introducing the previous occurrences, in the form of a narrative episode. Of the former, the introductory part follows the historical arrangement; but the fable becomes strictly poetical, as soon as the great action of the piece commences, that is, if I mistake not, immediately after the sickness of Alworthy: for, from that period, the incidents proceed in an uninterrupted series to the final event, which happens about two months after.

Since the days of Homer, the world has not seen a more artful epick fable. The characters and adventures are wonderfully diversified: yet the circumstances are all so natural, and rise so easily from one another, and cooperate with so much regularity in bringing on, even while they seem to retard, the catastrophe, that the curiosity of the reader is kept always awake, and, instead of flagging, grows more and more impatient as the story advances, till at last it becomes downright anxiety. And when we get to the

end, and look back on the whole contrivance, we are amazed to find, that of so many incidents there should be so few superfluous; that in such variety of fiction there should be so great probability; and that so complex a tale should be so perspicuously conducted, and with perfect unity of design. These remarks may be applied either to *Tom Jones* or to *Amelia:* but they are made with a view to the former chiefly; which might give scope to a great deal of criticism, if I were not in haste to conclude the subject. Since the time of Fielding, who died in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-four, the comick romance, as far as I am acquainted with it, seems to have been declining apace from simplicity and nature, into improbability and affectation.

Let not the usefulness of romance writing be estimated by the length of my discourse upon it. Romances are a dangerous recreation. A few, no doubt, of the best may be friendly to good taste and good morals; but far the greater part are unskilfully written, and tend to corrupt the heart, and stimulate the passions. A habit of reading them breeds a dislike to history, and all the substantial parts of knowledge; withdraws the attention from nature, and truth; and fills the mind with extravagant thoughts, and too often with criminal propensities. I would therefore cau-

tion my young reader against them: or, if he must, for the sake of amusement, and that he may have something to say on the subject, indulge himself in this way now and then, let it be sparingly, and seldom.

ON THE

ATTACHMENTS

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MARRIAGE might be proved to be natural from its universality: for no nation has yet been discovered, where, under one form or other, it does not take place. Whether this be the effect of

* There are modern authors, who, from an excessive admiration of the Greek policy, seem to have formed erroneous opinions in regard to some of the points touched on in this discourse. With a view to those opinions, the discourse was written several years ago. Afterwards, when a book called *Thelyphthora* appeared, I had thoughts of enlarging these remarks, so as to make them comprehend an examination of it. This the authors of the *Monthly Review* rendered unnecessary, by giving a very ingenious, learned, and decisive confutation of that profligate system. I therefore publish

a law prescribed in the beginning by the Creator, and circulated by tradition through all the tribes of mankind: or, which amounts to the same thing, whether this be the result of natural passions co-operating with human reason: certain it is, that, even among savages, and where there was hardly any trace of government or art, and none at all of literature, men and women have been found, living together in domestick union, and providing necessaries for their children, and for each other.

In the lower world of animals, the union of sexes is temporary: the passions that prompt to it being periodical, and the young soon in a condition to live independent. While this union lasts, the male and female, of certain tribes, are direc-

my essay, as it was at first written: satisfied, that Mr. Madan's book, whatever private immoralities it may promote among the licentious and ignorant, will have no weight with the publick; nor deserve further animadversion, unless he should subjoin to it, as an appendix, or premise, by way of introduction, (what indeed seems wanting to complete his plan) an argument to prove, that the only true religion is the Turkish, and that of all forms of policy a free government is the worst. For, as the world is now constituted, the scheme of this reverend projector (REVEREND! it is, it seems, even so!) is not compatible with any other political establishment, than that of mahometan despotism.

ted, by the instinct of their nature, to be mutually assistant to their young, and to one another. But, when the young are able to take care of themselves, it happens for the most part, that the family breaks up; and parents and offspring know each other no more: and, till the return of the season appointed by the Author of nature for its commencement, the passion founded on diversity of sex is entirely over. Nor, even when that season returns, do those that were formerly connected seek to renew the connection; and the following attachment is, like the preceding, fortuitous. This, with a few exceptions, appears to be the ordinary course of things among those creatures, whose union most resembles that which prevails in the human species. In some other tribes, the connection is still more temporary, and the young are left to the care of the mother; the male being equally, and totally, inattentive, both to his mate, and to her offspring.

But with man the case is very different. Human infants are of all animals the most helpless. The tenderest care is necessary to prevent their perishing; and that must be long continued, before they can preserve themselves from danger; nay, years must pass away, before they have acquired such knowledge, or dexterity, as enables them to provide for themselves. A savage, not-

withstanding his hardy frame, and the fewness of his wants, can hardly be supposed capable of supporting himself by his own industry, for the first eight or ten years of his life: and in civil society, the term of education ought to be, and the period of helplessness must be, considerably longer. And if, before this period is over, children be left destitute of those friends, who were connected with them by the ties of blood, they will be indebted for their preservation to the humanity of the stranger.

Now man, being endowed with reflection and foresight, must be sensible of all this. Being, moreover, compassionate in his nature, and having that affection to his offspring, whereof many brutes are not destitute, he cannot but consider himself as under an obligation to take care of that helpless infant, whom he has been the means of bringing into the world. And this, together with the tenderness, wherewith it is natural for him to regard the mother of his child, would incline him, even of his own accord, and previously to the restraints of human law, to live for some time with his child and its mother, and give them that aid, whereof they now stand so much in need.

We naturally contract a liking to those, who have long been the objects of our beneficence,

especially when we consider them as dependent on us: and it is further natural, for persons who have lived long together, to be unwilling to part. There is something too, as Lucretius well observes, * in the looks and smiles of children, that has a peculiar efficacy in softening the heart of man. The father, therefore, even though a savage, who had once taken up his abode with his infant and its mother, would probably become more and more attached to both: and the woman and he, being mutually serviceable to each other, would contract a mutual liking, more durable than that which arises from mere difference of sex; and look upon themselves as united by ties of friendship and of gratitude. That their connection would continue is, therefore, more probable, than that it would be dissolved: and, long before the first child was in a condition to shift for itself, a second, and a third, perhaps, would have a claim to their parental care, and give additional weight to every one of those motives, which had hitherto determined them to live together.

From this view of things; and if it be considered further, that, the more we advance in

* ——— Puerique parentum
Blanditiis facile ingenium fregere superbum.
Lib. v. vers. 1016.

years, the more we become inclined to a stationary life; it seems not unreasonable to infer, that, even among savages, if they were not utterly brutal, the union of the sexes, however slight the cause that first gave rise to it, might have a tendency to last, not merely for a day, or a year, but for many years, and perhaps till death. And thus the idea of marriage would become prevalent; that is, of an union for life of one man with one woman, for their mutual benefit, and for that of their children. And, as soon as government was formed, the salutary effects, both publick and private, of such an institution, would be too conspicuous, not to procure for it the sanction of positive laws.

This deduction, though it may seem to be inferred *a priori* from the nature of man, is not wholly conjectural. Many facts might be quoted to confirm it, from the history of unpolished nations, and from the sentiments of the vulgar throughout the world. Among the Germans of old, and all those northern tribes who destroyed the Roman empire; among the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, * and Romans, and among the ori-

* If it be true, that, on certain emergencies, when many of their people had been destroyed by war or other calamities, some of the Grecian states granted a toleration to the men to marry more than one wife each, it

ginal natives of America, marriage was established, polygamy unknown, and adultery considered as a crime. The love of children and kindred is every where, among the vulgar, a most powerful principle: and in all the nations we have heard of, that were not sunk in the grossest barbarity, genealogy is a matter of general concern. But a regard to genealogy, the love of kindred, natural affections to children, and punishments denounced by law on polygamy and adultery, could never take place, except among those, who have both an idea of marriage, and a respect for it.

In fact, that perversion of conduct and principle, which bids defiance to every thing that is sacred in the matrimonial contract, and hardens the heart against the endearments of natural affection, is seldom known either in savage, or in common life; but is more apt to take its rise among those of the higher ranks, whom luxury, inattention, and flattery have corrupted. If the example that is set by such persons were to be fol-

cannot be said, that polygamy was *unknown* to them. But this was never a general practice among that people. Marriage they considered as an union of one man with one woman. When Herodotus says, that Anaxandridas the Lacedemonian had two wives, he remarks, that it was contrary to the custom of the Lacedemonians. See *Potter's Antiquities of Greece*, book 4. chap. 11.

lowed by the body of a people, friendship and love would be at an end; self-interest and sensuality would detach individuals from their country, and from one another; every house would be divided against itself, and every man against his neighbour; the very idea of publick good would be lost, because a man would see nothing in the world, but himself, that was worth contending for: and all the charities of domestick life, the great humanizers of the heart of man, and the purest sources of sublunary joy, would be despised and forgotten.

For suppose marriage abolished: or suppose, for it is the same thing, that its laws are to be universally disregarded: is it not self-evident, that the forming of families, and the attachments of consanguinity, together with all decency and order, would be abolished, or disregarded, at the same time? Nay, industry would be abolished too: for what is a greater, or more honourable, incitement to industry, than the desire of doing good to friends and kindred? But in the case supposed, there would be no such thing as kindred; and the condition of mankind would resemble that of wild beasts: with this difference, however, that our genius for contrivance, our sensibility, and our capacity for wickedness, would render us a thousand times more wretched, and more detestable.

I have endeavoured to account for the general prevalence of the matrimonial union, by proving it to be the result of human passions cooperating with human reason. It promotes the happiness of the individual, by means the most friendly to the social and sympathetick nature of man. It must, therefore, promote the publick weal; both because the publick is made up of individuals; and also, because, by this institution, the race of men is continued from age to age, in a way, not only consistent with social affection, decency, industry, and patriotism, but tending in an eminent degree to encourage all these virtues. Without it, a few gloomy and beastly savages might exist: but of all government and good order, and of every thing that is elegant, praiseworthy, or comfortable in life, it is to be considered as the foundation.

Will it be objected, that marriage may have been the cause of misery to some individuals? Granting that it has; and that, when it was so, the persons concerned were never themselves to blame, (which is granting more than any rational opponent would require) this is only one evidence, of what is too plain to need any, that in the present world nothing can be completely good which is tainted with human imperfection. Medicine, philosophy, liberty, and religion, are

good things: yet medicine has killed, as well as cured; and by philosophy men have been led into projects that ended in ruin: free governments have fallen into anarchy, and moderate monarchies into despotism: religion itself may be lost in superstition, and uncharitableness and cruelty are the consequences. Nay, to come to more familiar instances, the ax may wound the hand of the most skilful mechanick; ships, guided by the best pilot, may be wrecked; bodily exercise may produce fever, and bodily rest may bring on more fatal maladies; tares spring up with the corn; and men have been poisoned, while they thought only of allaying their hunger and thirst. But does it follow, that eating, and drinking, and agriculture, are pernicious; that bodily exercise and bodily rest are both to be avoided; that art, and science, and government, and religion, are detrimental to human happiness? If nothing is valuable, but what has no mixture of evil, then there is nothing in this world of any value; and life itself, and all the comforts of life, are insignificant things.

Nor let it be supposed, that I mean by these reasonings to insinuate, that it is every man's duty to enter into this union. By evincing its importance to publick and private good, we do indeed prove, that every man ought to reverence

the institution and its laws, and that it is the duty of all persons in authority to give the greatest encouragement to it, and to disallow every practice that tends to bring it into disrepute. But it cannot be the duty of any person to enter into this state, whose circumstances or way of life would render it imprudent to do so; or who is disqualified for it, either by want of inclination, or by such perversities of mind or infirmities of body, as might make it impossible for him to be an agreeable associate. In regard to a connection, whereon the happiness of life so essentially depends, we should be permitted to judge for ourselves, and be determined by our own free will. We have heard indeed of laws in some countries, commanding all the citizens to marry; but it seems to have been bad policy: for neither happiness to the parties, nor good education to their children, could ever be expected from forced alliances. In matters of this kind, it is better to allure, than to compel. And that might be done with good success, if licentious behaviour were always the object of legal animadversion, and always followed by sensible inconvenience; and if particular advantages were annexed to the condition of those who had quitted the state of celibacy. In either of these respects, I cannot pay great compliments to the virtue, or to the wisdom, of

latter times. Indeed, as to the first, it may be said, *Quid leges sine moribus?* What avail good laws, when the manners are evil? And, as to the second, I know not, whether any modern people have ever thought it worth their while to imitate that part of the Roman policy, which allotted certain privileges to the parent of three children, and determined, not by their age, but by the number of their children, the precedency of consuls and senators; or that similar institution of the Athenian commonwealth, which required, that a citizen should, by being married, be supposed to have given security for his good behaviour, before he could be honoured with the command of an army, or any other publick trust.

While the manners of a people are tolerably pure; while industry is encouraged, and no unreasonable taxes are laid upon the necessaries of life, matrimony is generally found to flourish, even though no peculiar advantages are annexed to it by the legislature. For the motives to this union are both natural, and strong. They may be reduced to the following. 1. That instinct, which tends to the continuation of the species; and which, being common to all animals, has nothing in it characteristical of human nature. 2. A preference of one person to another, founded on a real or fancied superiority in mind, or body, or

both; which, as it implies comparison, and a taste for beauty, as well as the admiration of intellectual and moral excellence, must be supposed to be peculiar to rational minds. The passion, thus arising from the view of agreeable qualities in another, is commonly called love. To the instinct formerly mentioned it imparts a delicacy, whereof inferiour natures are not susceptible; and from the same instinct it derives a vivacity, whereby it is distinguished from all the forms and degrees of friendship, that may take place between persons of the same sex. 3. Benevolence, goodwill, or a desire to make the beloved person happy, is a third motive to this union. This may seem to be the same with the love just now mentioned: but we must distinguish them in science, because they are not always united in nature. When, for example, the passion that springs from diversity of sex, and is refined and heightened by the admiration of agreeable qualities, aims at its own gratification, although with ruin to the admired object; or when, by success, it is transformed into indifference or hatred; such a passion, though it may be called love, has surely nothing of goodwill in it: for if it partook of this affection, the circumstance alluded to, by blending it with gratitude, pity, and other tender emotions, would make it more

benevolent, and more generous, than it was before. 4. The love of offspring may be considered as a fourth motive: and a regard to one's own happiness as a fifth. All these principles of conduct are natural to man; and, when united, form a passion which does him honour, and seems to promise him happiness. But if one or more of them be wanting, an alliance founded on the others will be more or less unnatural, according as the generous and rational principles are less or more predominant.

Now, these propensities being natural to man, and tending to produce the relation we speak of, it follows, that this relation must be natural to him; or, in other words, that providence, in giving him these propensities, intended, that he should form the connection to which they lead. And for this, human beings are still further qualified, by the peculiar characters of the two sexes. The one being of a more delicate make, and withal particularly inclined and adapted to what may be called the internal administration of a family; and the other of a hardier frame, and more enterprising genius, and fit for defending a family from external injury: their respective abilities form, when united, a complete system of the powers essential to domestick policy. There are many household duties, for which nature has not

qualified the man: and many offices, both domestick and civil, whereof the woman is not capable. In a word, the two sexes are natural associates; feminine weakness being compensated by masculine strength, and what is harsh in the male character by the delicacy of the female: and, in general, the peculiar talents of the one sex being a supplement to the peculiar imperfections of the other. It is true, we sometimes meet with a womanish man, and with a mannish woman. But both are awkward to a degree that proves them to be unnatural: and the words, whereby we denote those characters, are terms of scorn and dislike. The name *virago* conveys the idea of a disagreeable woman; and *effeminate*, applied to one of the other sex, denotes a contemptible man. I might add, that the very dress of the one does not become the other; and that nature has established a great difference in their voices, that of a man being eight notes deeper or graver than that of a woman. Cicero distinguishes feminine from manly beauty, calling the former *venustas*, and the latter *dignitas:* and indeed, at Rome, as the men were almost continually in the open air, and exposed, with their heads uncovered, to the sun of a warm climate, their complexion, and cast of features, must have differed very much from that of the women, who were for the most

part within doors. * And with us, and in every other civilized country, many of those outward accomplishments, that become a woman, would not be graceful in a man; and those defects that are pardonable, and sometimes pleasing, in the one, would in the other be intolerable. That vivacity, for example, which is not blamed in a man, might be impudence in a woman; and that timidity, which detracts nothing from the female character, would make a man not only ridiculous, but infamous.

I will not enlarge further on this topick. It is sufficiently manifest, that a man and a woman are different characters, and formed for different employments; and are, each of them, when united, more complete animals, (if I may so speak) and have the means of happiness more in their power, than when separate. Nothing more needs be said to prove, that the matrimonial union is natural and beneficial.

By this union, providence seems to have intended the accomplishment of these very important purposes. First, the continuation of the human race in a way consistent with virtue, decency, and good government. Secondly, the training up of human creatures for the several

* See Essay on Imagination. Chap. II. Sect. iv. § 1.

duties incumbent upon them as rational and moral beings. And thirdly, the happiness of the persons who form this connection.

Some questions here occur, on which mankind are not unanimous, and which, therefore, it may be proper to examine. I. It may be asked, whether it is according to nature, that the married persons should be only two, one man and one woman? II. Whether the matrimonial union should last through the whole of life? III. Whether the rearing and educating of children should be left to the parents, or provided for by the publick?

I. The first question may be otherwise expressed thus: Is polygamy lawful? We may imagine two sorts of polygamy: the first, when one woman has at one time two or more husbands; the second, when one man has at one time two or more wives. The former is said to prevail in the kingdom of Thibet in the East Indies; but is so very uncommon, that we need not take particular notice of it; especially, as to both sorts the same arguments may be applied, which I am now going to apply to the latter. The former is indeed liable to other objections of a peculiar nature: but I do not care to specify them; and besides, they are obvious.

Is it then right, that one man should at one

time have more than one wife? I answer, No: and these are my reasons.

1. All men have a right to happiness; and it has been shown, that providence intended, by the union of the sexes, to promote the happiness of mankind, as well as some other important purposes. Further, those propensities, that prompt to this union, are common to all men; so that nature does not seem to have intended it for one man rather than another. All therefore have an equal right to it. Consequently, it is not lawful to deprive an innocent person of this privilege: which, however, would necessarily be the case, if polygamy were to prevail. For the number of males that are born is found to be so nearly equal to that of females, being as twenty to nineteen, according to some computations, or as fourteen to thirteen, according to others, that, if all men and all women were to be married, there could not be more than one wife to one husband, and one husband to one wife.

If it be objected, that, according to these computations, one woman in thirteen, or in nineteen, might have two husbands, the answer is, that men are, by their strength and spirit of enterprise, exposed to many dangers, in war, for example, and by sea, to which the other sex is not liable; and that, therefore, to keep the two sexes equal in

respect of number, a small surplus of males must be necessary. This equality is a decisive intimation, that polygamy is not according to nature. If it were natural, some provision would have been made for it. But the economy of nature is plainly against it. And let me add, that this exact proportion of the sexes, continued through so many ages, and in all countries, (for we have no good reason to think, that it was ever otherwise in any country) it is a striking proof of the care of a wise providence, for the preservation of the human race; and is, moreover, a perpetual miracle, (if I may so speak) to declare, both that the union of the sexes is natural, and that polygamy is not.

It is true, that, either from disinclination, or from unfavourable circumstances, many men never marry at all. But the same thing may be said with equal truth of many women. So that still, the balance of the sexes may be presumed to be even; and one man cannot marry more than one wife, without contradicting the views of providence, and violating the rights of his fellow creatures.

2. Polygamy is inconsistent with that affection, which married persons ought to bear to one another. To love one more than any other, is natural, and common: but to love two or more in pre-

ference to all others, and yet to love them equally, is so uncommon, that we may venture to call it unnatural, and impossible. Such a passion, at least, would not be tolerated in poetry or romance; for every reader would say, that it was incredible in fiction, because it never happens in fact. In comedy sometimes, indeed, we find a profligate man making love to two women, or a lady at a loss which of two lovers to prefer: but this cannot be without dishonesty; for if the passion for the one be sincere, that for the other must be hypocritical. Even where polygamy prevails, it is generally found, that, whatever be the number of his wives, the husband has but one favourite. The consequence is, that she is hated by all the rest, and he on her account.

And this leads me to remark, 3. that polygamy destroys the peace of families; and therefore stands in direct opposition to one of the chief ends of the matrimonial union. The wives hate one another as rivals, and bear a particular dislike to her who happens for the time to be most in favour with the husband. The children naturally take part with their respective mothers; and instead of fraternal affection, are animated with mutual jealousy and envy. And thus a family becomes the seat of continual strife; and the husband must exercise a tyrannical authority over

the whole, and make those obey him through fear, who are not attached to him by love. This observation is warranted by fact. In countries, where polygamy prevails, the wives are the slaves of the husband, and the enemies of one another; they are confined in a prison called a seraglio; and are attended by eunuchs, who serve at once for guards, and for spies, and who it seems, form a necessary part of this detestable system of policy; the children are dissatisfied with the father, on account of his partialities, and with one another, because of their interfering interests: and conspiracies, poisoning, and assassination, are frequently the consequence. Surely, an economy cannot be rational, which for its very being depends upon practices that are a disgrace to human nature; and, a family thus divided against itself can never be happy. And in a nation made up of such families, though there may be that dark and silent tranquillity, which proceeds from fear, there cannot be cheerfulness, industry, liberty, or kind affection; there cannot be that politeness, and sense of honour, which accompany the free and decent intercourse of the sexes; nor can there be that circulation of sentiments, whereby literature, free inquiry, and the knowledge and the love of truth, are promoted in the more enlightened parts of the world. This too is according to fact. The

Turks, who allow polygamy, are the idle, the ignorant, and the devoted slaves of a tyrant, and of a most absurd superstition: within their own families they are tormented with apprehension and jealousy: honour is so little known among them, that they are said to have no word in their language to express the idea: and it is the principle of fear alone, that supports their government. When a despotick prince is no longer feared by his people, he is undone; and when he ceases to be afraid of them, his tyranny is intolerable.

4. After what has been said, it is unnecessary to add, in the fourth place, that polygamy, being subversive of filial and parental affection, must be inconsistent with the right education of children, and so counteract another chief end of marriage. The father will probably be partial to the children of his favourites. Certain it is, that, if he have many children by several wives, he cannot love them all equally; nor can his love fail to be alienated by those dissatisfactions which he sees prevailing among them, and whereof he knows himself to be in a great measure the cause. Some of his children, therefore, he will look upon in the light of conspirators; and for his own security will be glad to form a party among the rest: which will widen the dissensions that divide his

household, by giving them the sanction of his own example. How is it possible, that, in such a family, children should be well educated, or that virtue should be a matter of general concern? Even with us, when the husband and the wife happen to disagree in regard to the management of their children, education is commonly neglected; the mother has one favourite, and the father another: and the children, following the example of their parents, adopt their humours and prejudices, and become licentious, disobedient, and regardless of instruction. Among the Turks, indeed, education cannot be considered as a matter of any great importance. In governments so tyrannical, the man who distinguishes himself by his genius, by his industry, or even by his virtue, becomes the object of jealousy to some person in power; so that the only way to live unmolested is to remain obscure and contemptible.

Enough has been said to prove that polygamy is unnatural, and destructive of virtue and happiness. But that it is in all possible cases criminal, I have no authority to affirm. Among christians, indeed, it must always be so, because forbidden by our religion; and in all christian countries it is punished, and in some capitally. But to the ancient Jews and patriarchs it was not forbidden; and seems in some cases to have been permitted

as a punishment for their intemperance in desiring it. The greatest calamities that befel David would not have taken place, if he had been contented with one wife; and the sensuality of Solomon in this particular has fixed an indelible blemish on one of the brightest characters that ever appeared among men.

II. The second question to be considered is, Whether the matrimonial union ought to last through the whole of life?

Marriage is dissolved in two ways, by death and by divorce. Of divorce there are two sorts; the one partial, or *a toro et mensa*, as the lawyers say, by which the parties are separated, but the marriage is not annulled: and when this happens, the wife, according to the law of England, is, in most cases, though not in all, entitled to an *alimony;* that is, to a certain provision from the husband; the amount of which is determined by the ecclesiastical court, according to the circumstances of the case, and the qualities of the parties. The other sort of divorce, which is called *divortium a vinculo matrimonii*, annuls the marriage altogether, and leaves the parties as free as if they had never been united.

This final divorce the New Testament allows in the case of adultery only: but does not say, that, upon conviction of that crime, it ought to

take place; and therefore, a christian legislature may warrantably establish, in regard to this matter, such limitations, as human wisdom may think most conducive to publick good. For if, on proof of adultery, the marriage were always to be dissolved, there is too much reason to fear, that, when a husband and wife were dissatisfied with each other, a desire of being disunited might tempt them to the commission of that wickedness. But so sacred is the nuptial tie accounted in most christian nations, that, by the canon law, and by the common law of England, this crime is not a sufficient ground for a final divorce, but only for a separation *a toro et mensa:* it may only be pleaded by the parties, as a reason for their being disengaged *a vinculo matrimonii;* but the legislature may either admit that plea, or reject it.* The only thing which, according to the common law of England, can nullify a marriage, is, its having been from the beginning null, because unlawful; as in the case of too near a degree of consanguinity. However, in England, upon a charge of adultery, marriage is sometimes annulled; not indeed by an action at common

* In Scotland, the sentence of the commissaries, proceeding on the charge of adultery, if there be no appeal from it, annuls the marriage totally; so that there is no occasion for recourse to the legislature.

law, but by an act of parliament made for the purpose.

I mention these particulars, to show the opinion of mankind concerning the dissolution of the nuptial tie during the life of the parties. For the laws of enlightened nations, especially those laws that are of long standing, are to be considered as the result of reason and experience united: and therefore, in every inquiry that relates to the expediency of human conduct, deserve very great attention. It is plainly a doctrine of christianity, as well as a principle of the British law, that the matrimonial union ought to be for life. And that the same conclusion may be drawn from philosophical considerations, that is, from the nature of man, and the end of the institution, it will not be difficult to prove.

The only scheme of temporary marriage, that has any shadow of plausibility, is that of those who contend, for argument's sake perhaps, that the man and woman should agree to be faithful to each other for a certain time; and then, if they found they were not happy, to separate, and be at liberty either to remain single, or to choose other partners. Now I have so good an opinion of human nature, as to believe, that, even if laws were made to this purpose, many men and women would be averse to a separation, from a re-

gard to their children, and to one another. But, in framing laws, we are not so much to presume upon the possible virtues of individuals, as to guard against the probable evils that may be apprehended from the general depravity of the human heart. And it is easy to foresee, that the scheme in question would give license to the profligate, expose the sober to temptation, destroy those sentiments of delicacy and esteem which the sexes ought to bear towards each other, poison the happiness of families, introduce disorder into the state, and prove ruinous to the education of children.

1. It cannot be denied, that rash marriages are more likely to prove unhappy, than such as are founded upon deliberate choice. And if this is true, whatever tends to make men and women considerate, in choosing partners for life, must tend eventually to the happiness of families. But if even the alarming thought, that the matrimonial union cannot be dissolved but by death, does not always prevent a rash choice; what, may we think, would be the consequence, if it were in the power of the parties to put an end to their union, and engage in a new one, whenever they pleased? The consequence would be, such precipitancy and caprice in forming this relation, as might preclude all hopes of conjugal felicity.

2. It will also be allowed, that persons, who are united by a sincere friendship, have a better chance to be happy, than those who come together without friendship. Now it is the nature of true friendship, to desire a *permanent* union: nay, good men hope to enjoy the society of their friends in another world for ever. Men may for a limited time enter into partnership in trade; and servants and masters may mutually become bound to each other for a certain number of months or years: gain, or convenience, is the foundation of such contracts; and, if friendship be superadded, that will continue when the contract is dissolved. But whoever thought of forming temporary friendship! Should we choose that person for our friend, who would tell us, that he was willing to be so for a year or two; but that thenceforth he and we were to be mutually indifferent to each other? Would it be possible for us to think his affection sincere, or indeed that he had for us any affection at all?

Besides, when a man tells a woman, that he wishes to employ his life in making her happy, (and this must be a sentiment in every marriage that is founded on esteem) is it not more likely, that she will love him as a husband, and as a friend, than if he were to say, or to be supposed to say, that he would be glad to live with her

two or three years, or perhaps for a longer time, if he found her agreeable, and did not change his mind? To a proposal of this sort, every woman, who had any pretensions to delicacy, to sense, or to virtue, would surely return a very contemptuous answer. Were matters to come to this pass, all esteem and confidence between man and woman would be at an end: and both to the one sex, and to the other, the love of gain, or of convenience, or a more shameful principle, would be, or (which is the same thing in this case) would seem to be, the sole motive to such temporary attachments. It follows, that they would be mutually suspicious, and mutually disgusted; and each inclined to pursue a private and separate interest at the other's expense. Whereas, when a man and a woman are united for life, from a principle of mutual esteem, (without which no marriage can be lawful) it is hardly possible, that they should have separate interests; or if, in consequence of some previous bargain on the subject of money, either party could become rich at the expense of the other, a regard to their children would, if they were not lost to all natural affection, inspire them with more generous sentiments.

3. It deserves to be considered, whether the scheme proposed would not debase those ideas of

delicacy, wherewith the intercourse of the sexes ought always to be accompanied. By delicacy, I here mean, a peculiar warmth and purity of affection, which can only be gratified by a consciousness of possessing, without a rival, the entire esteem of the person beloved. The natural effect of it is, a desire to please, not merely by a generous and respectful behaviour, but also by entertaining no thoughts or wishes, but such as the object of the passion would approve. It is this, that distinguishes the union of cultivated minds from the brutal inclinations of a sensualist or savage: and, as it promotes modesty of speech and of manners, and lays a restraint on every irregular desire, it must be of importance both to publick order, and to private happiness. But how is it possible, that this delicacy should form any part of the attachment of those, who have no other view than to be together for a stipulated time; and who perhaps, during their term of cohabitation, had their thoughts fixed on other partners, and were listening to proposals, or contriving plans, for a new connection! Persons, thus united, would in these respects be *suspicious* at least of one another; which would destroy all delicacy of affection, and could hardly fail to end in mutual abhorrence.

4. This scheme would be fatal to the educa-

tion of children. By it, they are, or they may be, even in their infancy, abandoned to the care of one of the parents, who, having lost all esteem for the other, and being now, probably, engrossed by a new attachment, cannot be supposed to retain any warmth of parental affection towards them. The other parent may also be engaged in a new alliance; and have little inclination to look back, except with disgust, upon the former, or any person connected with it. Thus the children are neglected by one parent, or perhaps by both. Or a second, or a third succession of brothers and sisters may be obtruded upon them; for whom they, detached from the present family, and deriving their origin from a family that no longer exists, cannot entertain any particular kindness. And thus, the ties of blood would be overlooked or forgotten; kindred would become too complex a thing to be comprehended by ordinary understandings; the parental, filial, and fraternal charities would of course be extinguished, the human heart hardened, and society transformed into a scene of confusion. Nor does it seem possible for human policy to contrive a cure for these evils, without removing their cause, by the establishment of regular matrimony.

If it were worth while to enlarge on a topick, which is too plain to require further illustration,

we might consider, how the particular interests of men and of women, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the strong and the sickly, would be affected by the scheme of temporary marriages. And I think it might be made appear, that to the young, the healthy, and the rich, it would afford the means of unbounded profligacy; while to the poor, the old, and the infirm, it must prove injurious and comfortless. In a word, marriage must be for life. If, at the will of the parties, it might be limited to a shorter term, it would give rise to as many evils as polygamy itself; and overturn all delicacy, decency, morality, good order, and kind affection. Grant, that a regular institution of matrimony may sometimes be attended with inconvenience, when persons must remain united for life, who yet, while united, cannot be happy. What then? Must the best rights of society be sacrificed to the humour of a few individuals, who perhaps, if they had it in their power to break loose from the present engagement, and to form another, would still be as unhappy as before? The evils complained of are to be remedied, not by unhinging society, but by reforming the education, and regulating the passions, of young people of both sexes. When this is done, let mutual affection, deliberately

formed, be the motive to the matrimonial union; let the persons united be careful, from a sense of their own infirmities, to cultivate mutual forbearance; let them repress intemperate thoughts, and apply diligently to the duties of their station: and there will be no reason to complain, that the sexes are made unhappy by being united for life.

I know not, whether temporary marriages, depending, for their duration, upon the will of the parties, ever took place in regular society: which may be considered as a proof, that they are not consistent with good order, or with the ends of the matrimonial union. It is true, that in some countries divorces have been more frequent, and permitted for slighter causes, than in others. But, for the most part, they have been subject to the cognisance of law, and not left to the determination of the parties. Among the Jews, indeed, before the promulgation of the gospel, the husband might dismiss his wife, on giving her, what scripture calls, a bill of divorcement. But we are told, from the highest authority, that in the earlier ages of the world, when mankind were less corrupt, it was not so; and that Moses allowed it, not because it was good, but in order to prevent greater evils, which he had reason to apprehend, from the known perverseness

of the Jewish nation. Romulus, too, permitted husbands on some occasions to put away their wives; for a Roman father had a sort of judicial authority over his household: but, if it be true, that there was no instance of a divorce at Rome, till the five hundred and twenty-fifth year of the city, may we not infer, that this law of Romulus was rashly made, and not conformable to the sentiments of the people; and that it remained in force, merely because it was overlooked; as many old laws do in all nations? Marriages of certain sorts were by the laws of Romulus declared perpetual: which Dionysius the historian greatly approves of; because he thinks, that it must have been, both to the husband and to the wife, a motive to discreet behaviour, and mutual forbearance. "This law," says he, "engaged "the wives, who had no other resource, to yield "a ready compliance to the temper of their "husbands; and it obliged the husbands, on the "other hand, to treat their wives as a necessary "possession, which they could not on any ac- "count relinquish." And it cannot be doubted, that when married persons know that their union is to be for life, they will be more inclined to adapt themselves to the tempers of one another, and to reform what is amiss in their own disposition, than if they had it in their power

to be divorced as soon as they became mutually dissatisfied. So that the perpetuity of this contract has a manifest tendency to promote the happiness of the parties, as well as to purify their manners.

III. Whether the rearing and education of children should be left to the parents, or provided for by the publick, is the third question which I propose to examine.

And it is readily allowed, that there must be an egregious fault in the policy of a nation, where the law does not provide a remedy, and a punishment, for the negligence of parents in this particular. And too many parents there are, who seem very inattentive to the right education of their children: nay it is to be feared, that not a few are chargeable, not with inattention only, but even with the guilt of corrupting the morals and the principles of their children, by indulgence and bad example. Do we not meet with young creatures, who seem to have learned to swear, and to lie, as soon as to speak? And can we suppose, that such a thing would have happened under the tuition of a good parent? I grant, that some natures may be more untractable than others: but there are certain vices, and swearing is one of them, to which there is no temptation in any of our natural appetites, which.

therefore, children can never acquire of themselves, and which the admonitions of an attentive parent could hardly fail to prevent, or to cure.

But, if the state were to abolish the ties of parental duty, by training up the young ones from their birth in seminaries, under the eye of teachers appointed by publick authority, it is to be feared, that the teachers might be still more negligent, because less affectionate, than parents; and that the influence of bad example would not be less fatal in those large societies, than in families. Publick institutions there are among us, for training up children at a distance from their parents: but domestick discipline is found to be as friendly to virtue, and is certainly more agreeable to nature. Boarding schools for young women have been accounted so dangerous to virtue, that intelligent parents, who send their infant daughters to those seminaries, are generally careful to take them home before they cease to be children.

While, therefore, I regret the inattention of many parents to one of the most indispensable of all human duties, I cannot adopt the sentiments of those, who maintain, that parents in general are not to be intrusted with the care of their young

ones.* For if children and their parents were forced to live separate, the attachments of kindred would be greatly weakened, if not entirely lost. Now this must be unsuitable to the views

* Of the proper methods of education, the generality of the common people are more ignorant, than of any other part of duty. They imitate one another in this respect; and a person who has no opportunities of observing their conduct, would hardly believe what absurd practices prevail among them. The books that have been written on education, many of which are very useful, come not into their hands, and are not level to their capacity. Indeed they are rather unwilling to receive advice on this head. "I breed my children," say they, "as I was bred myself:" to which some complaisant neighbour subjoins, "And if they do as you have done, "they will act their part very well." While matters go on thus, improvements are not to be looked for in education, or in any thing else.

How is the evil to be remedied? by separating the children from their parents, and committing the former to the care of strangers? No: such a remedy would be worse than the evil. How then? by instructing parents in their duty? Yes; that would be the easier, the more natural, and the more effectual way.

I have therefore often wished, that the teachers of religion would, in their publick discourses and private admonitions, not only recommend the right education of children in general terms, which in fact they do, but also lay down, and enforce the method of it, with some degree of minuteness; exposing at the same time the

of providence; who would not have made the ties of natural affection so strong in every animal, and especially in man, if it had been for the advantage of animal life, or of human society, that they should be dissolved or disregarded. That nature intended the mother to be the nurse of her own infant, and that the worst consequences are to be apprehended when we wilfully contradict this intention of nature, is too plain to require any proof. And when the mother has, with the father's aid, discharged that part of her duty, in

impropriеties of the prevailing practice. The subject, it may be said, is too copious to be discussed in a sermon, and too familiar to be delivered from the pulpit. I answer, that, if expressed in proper language, it would derive dignity from its importance; and that its relation to common life would render it intelligible and interesting. And surely education is not a more copious theme, than many of those are, on which it is the preacher's duty to expatiate. It would not be necessary for him to enter into it with the nicety of a Locke, or a Rousseau. If he could only reform a few of the grosser impropriеties of domestick discipline, he would be a blessing to his people, and an honour to his profession. Nor would parents only be improved by discourses of this nature. He who instructs the teacher may convey useful hints to those who are to be taught. By hearing a parent's duty explained, a child could hardly fail to learn his own.

which, in ordinary cases, every mother finds the greatest delight; and when thus the attachment of both parents to their child is heightened by long acquaintance, and by those thrillings of ineffable satisfaction, wherewith every exercise of parental affections are thus wound up to the highest pitch, *where* is the child likely to meet with so much tenderness, and so zealous a concern for his temporal and eternal welfare, as in the house of those who gave him birth?

An interchange of the parental and filial duties is, moreover, friendly to the happiness, and to the virtue of all concerned. It gives a peculiar sensibility to the heart of man; infusing a spirit of generosity and a sense of honour, which have a most benign influence on publick good, as well as on private manners. When we read, that Epaminondas, after the battle of Leuctra, declared that one chief cause of his joy was the consideration of the pleasure which his victory would give his father and mother; is it possible for us to think, that this man, the greatest, perhaps, and the best that Greece ever saw,* would have been so generous, or so amiable, if he had not known who his parents were? In fact, there are not many virtues

* Epaminondas princeps, ut opinor, Græciæ. Cicero. Tuscul.

that reflect greater honour upon our nature, than the parental and the filial. When any uncommon examples of them occur in history, or in poetry, they make their way to the heart at once, and the reader's melting eye bears testimony to their loveliness.

Amidst the triumphs of heroism, Hector never appears so great, as in a domestick scene, when he invokes the blessing of heaven upon his child: nor does Priam, on any other occasion, engage our esteem so effectually, or our pity, as when, at the hazard of his life, he goes into the enemy's camp, and into the presence of his fiercest enemy, to beg the dead body of his son. Achilles's love to his parents forms a distinguishing part of his character; and that single circumstance throws an amiable softness into the most terrifick human personage that ever was described in poetry. The interview between Ulysses and his father, after an absence of twenty years, it is impossible to read without such emotion, as will convince every reader of sensibility, that Homer judged well, in making parental and filial virtue the subject of his song, when he meant to show his power over the tender passions.

Virgil was too wise not to imitate his master in this particular. He expatiates on the same virtue with peculiar complacency; and loves to

set it off in the most charming colours. His hero is an illustrious example. When Anchises refuses to leave Troy, and signifies his resolution to perish in its flames, Eneas, that he may not survive his father, or witness the massacre of his household, is on the point of rushing to certain death; and nothing less than a miracle prevents him. He then bears on his shoulders the infirm old man to a place of safety, and ever after behaves towards him as becomes a son and a subject; * and speaks of his death in terms of the utmost tenderness and veneration. As a father he is equally affectionate: and his son is not deficient in filial duty. Turnus, when vanquished, condescends to ask his life, for the sake of his aged parent, who, he knew, would be inconsolable for his loss. The young, the gentle, the beautiful Lausus dies in defence of his father; and the father provokes his own destruction, because he cannot live without his son, and wishes to be laid with him in the same grave. The lamentations of Evander over his Pallas transcend all praise of

* On the death of Priam and his sons, Anchises became king of the Trojans, and accordingly is represented by Virgil as commander in chief in Eneas's expedition. After his death, Eneas is called king by his followers. See Eneid. i. 548. 557.

criticism. And nothing, even in this poem, the most pathetick of all human compositions, is more moving, than what is related of the gallant youth Euryalus; when, on undertaking that night adventure which proved fatal to him, he recommends his helpless parent to the Trojan prince. "She knows not," says he, "of this enterprise; "and I go without bidding her farewel: for I "call the gods to witness that I cannot support "the sight of a weeping mother." Let a man read Virgil with attention, and with taste; and then be a cruel parent, or an undutiful child, if he can. And let him ask his own heart this question, Whether human nature would not be deprived of many of its best affections, and human society of its best comforts, if the ideas of those projectors were to be realized, who propose to improve the political art, by annihilating the attachments of consanguinity.

Mankind have in all ages paid respect to high birth, and entertained a partiality towards those who are descended of virtuous ancestors. And of several good reasons, that have been given for it, this is one; that we may have more confidence in the honour of such persons, than in those who have no illustrious, or honest, kindred to disgrace by their unworthiness, or to adorn by their virtue. Is not this a proof, that the ties of kindred are understood to be friendly to our nature; and,

that the policy, which tends to loosen them, by keeping parents and children separate, or mutually unknown to each other, must be detrimental to publick good, as well as to private happiness? Bacon has an excellent remark on this subject. "Unmarried men," says he, "are best friends, "best masters, best servants: but not always best "subjects; for they are light to run away; and "almost all fugitives are of that condition. For "soldiers," continues he, a little after, "I find "that the generals in their hortatives commonly "put men in mind of their wives and children: "and I think the despising of marriage among "the Turks maketh the vulgar soldier more "base. Certainly, wife and children are a kind of "discipline of humanity: and single men, though "they be many times more charitable, because "their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other "side, they are more cruel and hardhearted be-"cause their tenderness is not so oft called "upon."*

My principal view in this argument is, to overturn one of Plato's theories. That philosopher is of opinion, that parents ought not to be intrusted with their children, because they are apt to ruin them by immoderate fondness. His plan,

* Essay viii.

therefore, is, that infants, as soon as born, should be conveyed to places set apart for them, and taken care of by nurses and teachers appointed by the publick; that parents may never know their own offspring; and that from their earliest years the rising generation may be taught to consider themselves as the children of the commonwealth. He thinks too, that the father and mother should not live in domestick union; nor ever meet, but on certain solemn festivals; and that even this indulgence should be denied to all, who are not in the prime of life, and of a healthy constitution. In a word, his plan tends to abolish families, to efface every idea of kindred, and to render the intercourse of the sexes in the rational world similar to that of brutes: which would make men worse than savages; destroy all the delicacies of modesty, and conjugal friendship; and deprive society of those most important means of improvement, which men and women derive from the company and conversation of each other. It would also divest us of those habits of mutual kindness that take their rise in a family, and are, as we have seen, so effectual in refining and adorning our nature; * and it would extinguish

* In that magnificent institution of the empress of Russia, for educating her young nobility, the children

many of the noblest incentives to activity and patriotism. If we had been sent into the world for no other purpose, but to act a part, like puppets or players, in the farce of democratical government; and had no private interest to contend for, while here, and no need to prepare our minds, by habits of piety and benevolence, for happiness hereafter: in a word, if we were creatures quite different from what we are, this plan might be allowed to have some meaning. But, taking man as he is, and paying a due regard to his inherent rights, and final destination, we cannot hesitate to pronounce it unnatural and absurd, and alike unfriendly to happiness and to virtue.

And what, you will ask, are the advantages supposed by the fanciful philosopher to result from it? He thinks, it would free the common-

are visited from time to time by their parents, and may correspond with them by letter; and none under the age of five years are sent to the academies. Thus that great and wise princess secures the continuance of parental and filial love, at the same time that she promotes, by the most effectual means, the civilization of her empire. For in this way, her nobles must soon equal those of the politest nations in elegance of manners; and the improvement of the common people will follow as a necessary consequence. Her nobility, indeed, are not in this respect her only care. To the interests of education in the middle ranks of life she is not less attentive

wealth from the evils of avarice, the chief motive to which he imagines to be one's attachment to a family. But in this he is widely mistaken. Attachment to a family gives rise to industry, and prudent economy, which ought always to be encouraged, because productive of private happiness, as well as of publick good; but has nothing to do with avarice; which is known to be subversive of benevolence, and to prevail more in hearts that are hardened against the claims of consanguinity, and the calls of nature, than among those who love their children and kindred. He thinks, that in this way the state would be supplied with healthy citizens: and in this too he is mistaken. For the constitution of the child may be bad, when that of the parent is good; and weakly parents have often strong children. Nor is bodily strength the only thing desirable in a good citizen; wisdom and virtue, which are often united with an infirm body, are much more important: Demosthenes, Cicero, and, in the latter part of his life, Julius Cesar, were valetudinarians; and one of the greatest men that Sparta ever produced, I mean Agesilaus, was lame of a leg. And it is found by experience, that, without being subject to the restraints proposed by this unnatural plan of policy, most men enjoy as much health, as is requisite to all the ordinary business

of life. Plato imagines further, that by his scheme rebellion and sedition would be prevented; which, he seems to think, do commonly take their rise among persons united by the ties of blood. But neither is this true. In civil commotions, we often see parents and children attach themselves to opposite parties; and one of the most shocking calamities attending civil war, is, that it promotes contention among kindred, and sets brother against brother, and the father against the son.

As to that indiscreet fondness wherewith some parents treat their children; it is an evil, no doubt, and tends to produce evil; but it hurts a few individuals only, and its bad consequences are often successfully counteracted by a little knowledge of the world: whereas the proposed remedy would affect the whole commonwealth with evils incomparably greater, and withal incurable. Besides, teachers, as well as parents, have been partial to favourites; but nobody ever thought of abolishing education, to get rid of this inconvenience. It would be like cutting off the legs, in order to keep the gout out of the great toe; or like knocking out all the teeth, for the purpose of preventing the toothach. The best security against the evils of parental fondness is parental love; and, where parents have good sense, that will always be security sufficient.

ILLUSTRATIONS

ON

SUBLIMITY.

ILLUSTRATIONS

ON

SUBLIMITY.

LONGINUS, the secretary of Zenobia queen of Palmyra, who was conquered by the emperour Aurelian, about the middle of the third century, composed many books of philosophy and criticism, and among others a discourse on sublimity, which is the only part of his writings that has been preserved to our time. He is an author, not more remarkable for accuracy of judgment, than for the energy of his style, and a peculiar boldness and elevation of thought. And men of learning have vied with each other, in celebrating and expounding that work; which is indeed one of the best specimens that remain of ancient criticism, and well deserves the attention of every scholar.

But he has used the word **Hupsos* in a more general sense, than is commonly annexed to the term *sublimity;* not always distinguishing what is sublime from what is elegant or beautiful. The

* ὕψος.

distinction, however, ought to be made. Both indeed give delight; but the gratification we derive from the one is different from that which accompanies the other. It is pleasing to behold a fine face, or an apartment elegantly furnished and of exact proportion; it is also pleasing to contemplate a craggy mountain, a vast cathedral, or a magnificent palace: but surely, the one sort of pleasure differs as much from the other, as complacency differs from admiration, or the soft melody of a flute from the overpowering tones of a full organ.

Grammarians are not agreed about the etymology of the word *sublime*. The most probable opinion is, that it may be derived from *supra* and *limus;* and so denotes literally the circumstance of being raised *above* the *slime*, the *mud*, or the *mould*, of this world. Be that as it may, it uniformly signifies in the Latin, whence we have taken it, *elevation*, or *loftiness*. And because whatever is much elevated, as a high building, or a high mountain, infuses into the beholder a sort of pleasing astonishment; hence those things in art or nature, which have the same effect on the mind, are with a view to that effect, called by the same name. Great depth, being the correlative of great height, and being indeed implied in it, (for whatever is high from below is deep

from above) and because it astonishes and pleases the imagination, is also to be considered as sublime. For, if we be ourselves secure, every one must have observed, that it is agreeable to look down, from a mountain, upon the plain, or from the top of a high building, upon the various objects below. Cotton says, with the energy and enthusiasm of Dryden:

O my beloved rocks, that rise
To awe the earth, and brave the skies!
From some aspiring mountain's crown,
How dearly do I love,
Giddy with pleasure, to look down:
And from the vales to view the noble heights above!*

"It is pleasant," says Lucretius, "to behold "from the land the labours of the mariner in a "tempestuous ocean; but nothing is more de- "lightful, than from the heights of science to "look down on those who wander in the mazes "of error: not," says he, "because we are grati- "fied with another's distress; but because there "is a pleasure in seeing evils from which we "ourselves are free." The fact is partly so; but the poet entirely mistakes the cause. It is pleasant to behold the sea in a storm, on account of its astonishing greatness and impetuosity; and it

* See Walton's Angler. Part ii.

is pleasant to look down from an elevated situation, because here too there is greatness and delightful astonishment. But to see others in danger, or unhappy in their ignorance, must always give pain to a considerate mind, however conscious it may be of its own security, and wisdom. Such a sentiment we need not wonder to find in an Epicurean poet; as all the views of his master terminated in self. But it is somewhat strange, that Creech, in a note upon the passage, should vindicate his author in these terms: Id asserit poeta, quod omnes sentiunt; qui dolore aut morbo laborantem videt, protinus, O me felicem: "The poet asserts nothing, but what is "warranted by universal experience; when we "see a man diseased, or in pain, we immediately "exclaim, or think, How happy are we!" Every generous mind *feels* the falsehood of this doctrine. It was, however, a favourite topick of Swift; as appears from those verses on his own death, in which he comments upon a silly and ambiguous maxim of Rochefoucault.* Accord-

* The maxim is, *Dans l'adversitè de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons toujours quelque chose, qui ne nous deplaist pas:* In the adversity of our best friends we find always something that does not displease us. This may mean, either, that while our best friends are in adversity we always meet with some gratification; or, that the adversity of our best friends is always to us the source

ing to this theory, the most desirable of all human conditions would be that of the superin-

of some gratification. The former remark is true: for while our friend is, or even while ourselves are, in trouble, we may no doubt have the comfort, of eating when we are hungry, drinking when thirsty, resting when weary; to say nothing of the higher enjoyments of science, and of virtue. But this is a childish observation; and has no particular reference to Rochefoucault's system. I therefore suppose the meaning to be, that the calamities which overtake our best friends always give us some degree of pleasure: and this, though no childish observation, every man, who is not corrupted by extreme selfishness, knows to be utterly false. It is natural to wish for that which we know to bring pleasure along with it: but what sort of person would he be, who for his own gratification could wish his best friends to be in adversity?

To this notable aphorism Swift makes a little addition, by his paraphrase. "In *all distresses* of our friends, We *first consult our private ends*," &c. What can this mean? A child who is playing near me gets a dangerous fall: a friend who is riding with me is thrown from his horse, and has his leg broken. In this case, what do I do? I *first of all*, says Swift, (what! before I either aid, or pity him? Yes; I *first*) consult some private end of my own; that is (if it be any thing) I consider, how I may make this accident turn to my own advantage. What might pass in the mind of Swift on an occasion like this, I know not: but in me, and in most other beings of human form, I am certain there would be no such idea. Without thinking of ourselves at all, we should instantly

tendent of an hospital, the keeper of bedlam, or the commander of galley slaves: who would

give every assistance in our power: or, if we did not, we should deserve to be driven out of society. But perhaps, by the word *first* the author here means *chiefly:* "When our friend is in distress, our chief desire is, "not that he may be relieved, but that we may from "his suffering reap some benefit." This will not mend the matter. For, at this rate, love is hatred; and *friend* and *enemy* are synonymous terms. The truth may be, that Swift, knowing the couplet would not be complete without a second line, and a rhyme to *friends*, took the liberty, on this one occasion,—*to make The one verse for the other's sake; For one for sense, and one for rhyme, He thought sufficient at this time.* But he brings examples to confirm his doctrine. He does. In order to *prove*, from *reason* and *experience*, that *in all distresses* of our friends we first consult our private ends, he argues, that, when our friend is NOT IN DISTRESS, but in an advantageous situation, we wish to be in as good a place as he, or perhaps in a better; that when Ned is in the gout, we patiently hear him groan, and are glad that we are not in it; that one poet wishes all his rival poets in hell, rather than that they should write better than he: and he urges other considerations, humourously expressed indeed, but not more to the purpose. In a word, his arguments amount to this: "Emulation is natural: "Some men, particularly poets and wits, are prone to "envy; And we think it a good thing to be in health. "*Argal*, There is no such thing in this world as sincere

every moment be rejoicing in the thought, that he was free from the miseries which he beheld around him.

What we admire, or consider as great, we are apt to speak of in such terms, as if we conceived it to be high in place: and what we look upon as less important, we express in words that properly denote low situation. We go *up* to London; and thence *down* into the country. The Jews spoke in the same manner of their metropolis, which was to them the object of religious veneration. "Jerusalem," says the psalmist, "is a city, to which the tribes go up:" and the parable of the good Samaritan begins thus, "A "certain man went down from Jerusalem to "Jericho." Conformably to the same idiom, heaven is supposed to be above, and hell to be beneath; and we say, that generous minds endeavour to reach the *summit* of excellence, and

"friendship, or disinterested compassion." This may be wit; but it is not sense.

Let not this note be deemed a digression. Of the sublimities of art and nature the human soul would be a very incompetent judge, if it were so mean, so contemptible, and so hateful a thing, as some writers would have us believe. Our taste for the sublime is considered by two great authors (who will be quoted in the sequel) as a proof of the dignity of our nature.

think it *beneath* them to do, or design, any thing that is base. The terms *base*, *groveling*, *low*, &c. and those of opposite import, *elevated*, *aspiring*, *lofty*, as applied in a figurative sense to the energies of mind, do all take their rise from the same modes of thinking. The Latins expressed admiration by a verb which properly signifies, *to look up* (*suspicere*); and contempt by another (*despicere*) whose original meaning is, *to look down*. A high seat is erected for a king, or a chief magistrate, and a lofty pedestal for the statue of a hero; partly, no doubt, that they may be seen at the greater distance, and partly, also, out of respect to their dignity.

But mere local elevation is not the only source of sublimity. Things that surpass in magnitude; as a spacious building, a great city, a large river, a vast mountain, a wide prospect, the ocean, the expanse of heaven, fill the mind of the beholder with the same agreeable astonishment. And observe, that it is rather the relative magnitude of things, as compared with others of the same kind, that raises this emotion, than their absolute quantity of matter. That may be a sublime edifice, which in real magnitude falls far short of a small hill that is not sublime: and a river two furlongs in breadth is a majestick appearance.

though in extent of water it is as nothing when compared with the ocean.

Great number, too, when it gives rise to admiration, may be referred to the same class of things. Hence an army, or navy, a long succession of years, eternity, and the like, are sublime, because they at once please and astonish. In contemplating such ideas or objects, we are conscious of something like an expansion of our faculties, as if we were exerting our whole capacity to comprehend the vastness of that which commands our attention.* This energy of the mind is pleasing, as all mental energies are, when unaccompanied with pain: and the pleasure is heightened by our admiration of the object itself; for admiration is always agreeable.

In many cases, great number is connected with other grand ideas, which add to its own grandeur. A fleet, or army, makes us think of power, and courage, and danger, and presents a variety of brilliant images. A long succession of years brings to view the vicissitude of human things, and the uncertainty of life, which sooner or later must yield to death, the irresistible destroyer. And eternity reminds us of that awful consideration, our own immortality; and is con-

* Spectator, Numb. 412. Gerard on Taste.

nected with an idea still more sublime, and indeed the most sublime of all, namely, with the idea of HIM, who fills immensity with his presence; creates, preserves, and governs all things; and is from everlasting to everlasting.

In general, whatever awakens in us this pleasurable astonishment is accounted sublime, whether it be connected with quantity and number, or not. The harmony of a loud and full organ conveys, no doubt, an idea of expansion and of power; but, independently on this, it overpowers with so sweet a violence, as charms and astonishes at the same time: and we are generally conscious of an elevation of mind when we hear it, even though the ear be not sensible of any melody. Thunder and tempest are still more elevating, when one hears them without fear; because the sound is still more stupendous; and because they fill the imagination with the magnificent idea of the expanse of heaven and earth, through which they direct their terrible career, and of that Almighty Being, whose will controls all nature. The roar of cannon, in like manner, when considered as harmless, gives a dreadful delight; partly by the overwhelming sensation wherewith it affects the ear, and partly by the ideas of power and danger, triumph and fortitude, which it conveys to the fancy.

Those passions of the soul yield a pleasing astonishment, which discover a high degree of moral excellence, or are in any way connected with great number, or great quantity. Benevolence and piety are sublime affections; for the object of the one is the Deity himself, the greatest, and the best; and that of the other is the whole human race, or the whole system of percipient beings. Fortitude and generosity are sublime emotions: because they discover a degree of virtue, which is not every where to be met with; and exert themselves in actions, that are at once difficult, and beneficial to mankind.* Great intellectual abilities, as the genius of Homer, or of Newton, we cannot contemplate without wonder and delight, and must therefore refer to that class of things whereof I now speak. Nay, great bodily strength is a sublime object; for we are agreeably astonished, when we see it exerted, or hear of its effects. There is even a sublime beauty, which both astonishes and charms: but this will be found in those persons only, or chiefly, who unite fine features with a majestic form; such as we may

* This idea of fortitude is admitted by the stoicks, and all the best moralists. That courage, says Tully, which aims only at self-interest, and is not regulated by equity and benevolence, is to be called *audacity* rather than *fortitude*.

suppose an ancient statuary would have represented Juno, or Minerva, Achilles, or Apollo.

When great qualities prevail in any person, they form what is called a sublime character.* Every good man is a personage of this order: but a character may be sublime, which is not completely good, nay, which is upon the whole very bad. For the test of sublimity is not moral approbation, but that pleasurable astonishment wherewith certain things strike the beholder. Sarpedon, in the Iliad, is a sublime character, and at the same time a good one: to the valour of the hero he joins the benignity of a gracious prince, and the moderation of a wise man. Achilles, though in many respects not virtuous, is yet a most sublime character. We hate his cruelty, passionate temper, and love of vengeance: but we admire him for his valour, strength, swiftness, generosity, beauty, and intellectual accomplishments; for the warmth of his friendship, and for his filial tenderness.† In a word, notwithstanding his violent nature, there is in his general conduct a mixture of goodness and of greatness, with which we are both pleased and astonished. Julius Cesar was never considered as a man of strict

* Gerard on Taste.

† Essay on Poetry and Musick. Part i. chap. 4.

virtue. But, in reading his *memoirs*, it is impossible not to be struck with the sublimity of his character: that strength of mind, which nothing can bear down; that self-command, which is never discomposed; that intrepidity in danger; that address in negotiation; that coolness and recollection in the midst of perplexity; and that unwearied activity, which crowds together in every one of his campaigns as many great actions as would make a hero. Nay even in Satan, as Milton has represented him in Paradise Lost, though there are no qualities that can be called good in a moral view; nay, though every purpose of that wicked spirit is bent to evil, and to that only; yet there is the grandeur of a ruined archangel: there is force able to contend with the most boisterous elements; and there is boldness, which no power, but what is almighty, can intimidate. These qualities are astonishing: and, though we always detest his malignity, we are often compelled to admire that very greatness by which we are confounded and terrified.

And be not surprised, that we sometimes admire what we cannot approve. These two emotions may, and frequently do, coincide: Sarpedon and Hector, Epaminondas and Aristides, David and Jonathan, we both approve and admire. But they do not necessarily coincide: for goodness calls

forth the one, and greatness the other; and that which is great is not always good, and that may be good which is not great. Troy in flames, Palmyra in ruins, the ocean in a storm, and Etna in thunder and conflagration, are magnificent appearances, but do not immediately impress our minds with the idea of good: and a clear fountain is not a grand object, though in many parts of the world it would be valued above all treasures. So in the qualities of the mind and body: we admire the strong, the brave, the eloquent, the beautiful, the ingenious, the learned; but the virtuous only we approve. There have been authors, indeed, one at least there has been, who, by confounding admiration with approbation, laboured to confound intellectual accomplishments with moral virtues; but it is shameful inaccuracy, and vile sophistry: one might as well endeavour to confound crimes with misfortunes, and strength of body with purity of mind; and say, that to be a knave and to lose a leg are equally worthy of punishment, and that one man deserves as much praise for being born with a healthy constitution, as another does for leading a good life.

But if sublime ideas are known by their power of inspiring agreeable astonishment, and if Satan in Paradise Lost is a sublime idea, does it not

follow, that we must be both astonished at his character, and pleased with it? And is it possible to take pleasure in a being, who is the author of evil, and the adversary of God and man?

I answer; that, though we know there is an evil spirit of this name, we know also, that Milton's Satan is partly imaginary; and we believe, that those qualities are so in particular, which we admire in him as great: for we have no reason to think that he has really that boldness, irresistible strength, or dignity of form, which the poet ascribes to him. So far, therefore, as we admire him for sublimity of character, we consider him, not as the great enemy of our souls, but as a fictitious being, and a mere poetical hero. Now the human imagination can easily combine ideas in an assemblage, which are not combined in nature; and make the same person the object of admiration in one respect, who in another is detestable: and such inventions are in poetry the more probable, because such persons are to be met with in real life. Achilles and Alexander, for example, we admire for their magnanimity, but abhor for their cruelty. And the poet, whose aim is to please, finds it necessary to give some good qualities to his bad characters; for, if he did not, the

reader would not be interested in their fortune, nor, consequently, pleased with the story of it.*

In the *picture* of a burning city, we may admire the splendour of the colours, the undulation of the flames, the arrangements of light and shade, and the other proofs of the painter's skill; and nothing gives a more exquisite delight of the melancholy kind, than Virgil's account of the burning of Troy. But this does not imply, that we should, like Nero, take any pleasure in such an event, if it were real and present. Indeed, few appearances are more beautiful, or more sublime, than a mass of flame, rolling in the wind, and blazing to heaven: whence illuminations, bonfires, and fireworks make part of a modern triumph. Yet destruction by fire is of all earthly things the most terrible.

An object more astonishing both to the eye, and to the ear, there is hardly in nature, than (what is sometimes to be seen in the West Indies) a plantation of sugarcanes on fire, flaming to a vast height, sweeping the whole country, and every moment sending forth a thousand explosions, like those of artillery. A good description of such a scene we should admire as sublime: for a description can neither burn nor destroy. But

* See Essay on Poetry and Musick. Part. i. chap. 3.

the planter, who sees it desolating his fields, and ruining all his hopes, can feel no other emotions than horrour and sorrow. In a word, the sublime, in order to give pleasing astonishment, must be either imaginary, or not immediately pernicious.

There is a kind of horrour, which may be infused into the mind both by natural appearances, and by verbal description; and which, though it make the blood seem to run cold, and produce a momentary fear, is not unpleasing, but may be even agreeable: and therefore, the objects that produce it are justly denominated sublime. Of natural appearances that affect the mind in this manner, are vast caverns, deep and dark woods, overhanging precipices, the agitation of the sea in a storm: and some of the sounds above mentioned have the same effect, as those of cannon and thunder. Verbal descriptions infusing sublime horrour are such as convey lively ideas of the objects of superstition, as ghosts and enchantments; or of the thoughts that haunt the imaginations of the guilty; or of those external things, which are pleasingly terrible, as storms, conflagrations, and the like.

It may seem strange, that horrour of any kind should give pleasure. But the fact is certain. Why do people run to see battles, executions, and shipwrecks? Is it, as an Epicurean would say,

to compare themselves with others, and exult in their own security while they see the distress of those who suffer? No, surely: good minds are swayed by different motives. It is, that they may be at hand, to give every assistance in their power to their unhappy brethren? This would draw the benevolent, and even the tenderhearted, to a shipwreck; but to a battle, or to an execution, could not bring spectators, because there the humanity of individuals is of no use. It must be, because a sort of gloomy satisfaction, or terrifick pleasure, accompanies the gratification of that curiosity, which events of this nature are apt to raise in minds of a certain frame.

No parts of Tasso are read with greater relish, than where he describes the darkness, silence, and other horrours, of the enchanted forest: and the poet himself is so sensible of the captivating influence of such ideas over the human imagination, that he makes the catastrophe of the poem in some measure depend upon them. Milton is not less enamoured "of forests and enchantments "drear:" as appears from the use to which he applies them in *Comus:* the scenery whereof charms us the more, because it affects our minds, as it did the bewildered lady, and causes "a thousand fantasies"—

—— to throng into the memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And aery tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

Forests in every age must have had attractive horrours: otherwise so many nations would not have resorted thither, to celebrate the rites of superstition. And the inventors of what is called the Gothick, but perhaps should rather be called the Saracen, architecture, must have been enraptured with the same imagery, when, in forming and arranging the pillars and aisles of their churches, they were so careful to imitate the rows of lofty trees in a deep grove.

Observe a few children assembled about a fire, and listening to tales of apparitions and witchcraft. You may see them grow pale, and crowd closer and closer through fear: while he who is snug in the chimney corner, and at the greatest distance from the door, considers himself as peculiarly fortunate; because he thinks that, if the ghost should enter, he has a better chance to escape, than if he were in a more exposed situation. And yet, notwithstanding their present, and their apprehension of future, fears, you could not perhaps propose any amusement that would at this time be more acceptable. The same love of such horrours as are not attended with sensible incon-

venience continues with us through life: and Aristotle has affirmed, that the end of tragedy is to purify the soul by the operations of pity and terrour.

The mind and body of man are so constituted, that without action, neither can the one be healthy, nor the other happy. And as bodily exercises, though attended with fatigue, as dancing, or with some degree of danger, as hunting, are not on that account the less agreeable; so those things give delight, which rouse the soul, even when they bring along with them horrour, anxiety, or sorrow, provided these passions be transient, and their causes rather imaginary than real.

The most perfect models of sublimity are seen in the works of nature. Pyramids, palaces, fireworks, temples, artificial lakes and canals, ships of war, fortifications, hills levelled and caves hollowed by human industry, are mighty efforts, no doubt, and awaken in every beholder a pleasing admiration; but appear as nothing, when we compare them, in respect of magnificence, with mountains, volcanoes, rivers, cataracts, oceans, the expanse of heaven, clouds and storms, thunder and lightning, the sun, moon, and stars. So that, without the study of nature, a true taste in the sublime is absolutely unattainable. And we need not wonder at what is related of Thomson, the author

of *The Seasons;* who, on hearing that a certain learned gentleman of London was writing an epick poem, exclaimed, " He write an epick poem! " it is impossible: he never saw a mountain in " his life." This at least is certain, that if we were to strike out of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, those descriptions and sentiments that allude to the grand phenomena of nature, we should deprive these poets of the best part of their sublimity.

And yet, the true sublime may be attained by human art. Musick is sublime, when it inspires devotion, courage, or other elevated affections: or when by its mellow and sonorous harmonies it overwhelms the mind with sweet astonishment: or when it infuses that pleasing horrour above mentioned; which, when joined to words descriptive of terrible ideas, it sometimes does very effectually.

Architecture is sublime, when it is large and durable, and withal so simple and well proportioned as that the eye can take in all its greatness at once. For when an edifice is loaded with ornaments, our attention to them prevents our attending to the whole; and the mind, though it may be amused with the beauty or the variety of the little parts, is not struck with that sudden astonishment, which accompanies the contemplation of sublimity. Hence the Gothick style of building,

where it abounds in minute decorations, and where greater pains are employed on the parts, than in adjusting the general harmony of the fabrick, is less sublime than the Grecian, in which proportion, simplicity, and usefulness, are more studied than ornament. It is true, that Gothick buildings may be very sublime: witness the old cathedral churches. But this is owing, rather to their vast magnitude, to the stamp of antiquity that is impressed on them, and to their having been so long appropriated to religious service, than to those peculiarities that distinguish their architecture from the Grecian.

The Chinese mode of building has no pretensions to sublimity; its decorations being still more trivial than the Gothick; and because it derives no dignity from associated ideas, and has no vastness of magnitude to raise admiration. Yet is it not without its charms. There is an air of neatness in it, and of novelty, which to many is pleasing, and which of late it has been much the fashion to imitate.

Painting is sublime, when it displays men invested with great qualities, as bodily strength, or actuated by sublime passions, as courage, devotion, benevolence. That picture by Guido Rheni, which represents Michael triumphing over the evil spirit, I have always admired for its sublimity,

though some criticks are not pleased with it. The attitude of the angel, who holds a sword in his right hand in a threatening posture, conveys to me the idea of dignity and grace, as well as of irresistible strength. Nor is the majestick beauty of his person less admirable: and his countenance, though in a slight degree expressive of contempt or indignation, retains that sweet composure, which we think essential to the angelick character. His limbs and wings are, it is true, contrasted: but the contrast is so far from being finical, that, if we consider the action, and the situation, we must allow it to be not only natural, but unavoidable, and such as a winged being might continue in for some time without inconvenience.* Guido is not equally fortunate in his delineation of the adversary; who is too mean, and too ludicrous, a figure, to cope with an archangel, or to require, for his overthrow, the twentieth part of that force which appears to be exerted against him. Painting is also sublime, when it imitates grand natural appearances, as mountains, precipices, storms, huge heaps of rocks and ruins, and the like.

At the time when Raphael began to distinguish himself, two styles of painting were cultivated in

* Essay on Imagination. Chap. II. Sect. iv. § 3.

Italy. His master Pietro Perugino copied nature with an exactness bordering upon servility; so that his figures had less dignity and grace than their originals. Michael Angelo ran into the opposite extreme; and, with an imagination fraught with great ideas, and continually aspiring to sublimity, so enlarged the proportions of nature, as to raise his men to giants, and stretch out every form into an extension that might almost be called monstrous. To the penetration of Raphael both styles seemed to be faulty, and both in an equal degree. The one appeared insipid in its accuracy, and the other almost ridiculous in its extravagance.* He therefore pursued a middle course; tempering the fire of Angelo with the caution of Perugino: and thus exhibited the true sublime of painting; wherein the graces of nature are heightened, but nothing is gigantick,

* I find that sir Joshua Reynolds, from whose judgment there is no appeal, thinks more favourably of the sublime of Michael Angelo. I therefore retract part of what is said above: but I am sure my indulgent friend will not be offended to see this remark, as I had written it before I met with his admirable discourse delivered in the royal academy, in December, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two. The few pieces I have seen of Michael Angelo must have been in his worst manner.

disproportioned, or improbable. While we study his cartoons, we seem to be conversing with a species of men, like ourselves indeed, but of heroick dignity and size.

This great artist is in painting, what Homer is in poetry. Homer magnifies in like manner; and transforms men into heroes and demigods; and, to give the more grandeur to his narrative, sets it off with marvellous events, which, in his time, though not improbable, were however astonishing. But Ariosto, and the authors of the old romance, resemble Michael Angelo in exalting their champions, not into heroes, but into giants and monsters. Achilles, though superiour to all men in valour, would not venture to battle without his arms: but a warriour of romance, whether armed or not, could fell a troop of horse to the earth at one blow, tear up trees by the root, and now and then throw a piece of a mountain at the enemy. The true sublime is always natural and credible: but unbounded exaggerations, that surpass all proportion and all belief, are more apt to provoke laughter than astonishment.

Poetry becomes sublime in many ways: and as this is the only fine art, which can at present supply us with examples, I shall from it select a specimen or two of the different sorts of sublimity.

1. Poetry is sublime, when it elevates the mind. This indeed is a general character of greatness. But I speak here of sentiments so happily conceived and expressed, as to raise our affections above the low pursuits of sensuality and avarice, and animate us with the love of virtue and of honour. As a specimen, let me recommend the account, which Virgil gives in his eighth book, of the person, family, and kingdom of Evander, an Arcadian prince, who, after being trained up in all the discipline of Greece, established himself and his people in that part of Italy, where a few centuries after, was built the great metropolis of the Roman empire. In the midst of poverty, that good old man retains a philosophical and a royal dignity. "This habi-"tation," says he, to Eneas, who had made him a visit, "has been honoured with the presence "of Hercules himself. Dare, my guest, to de-"spise riches; and do thou also fashion thyself "into a likeness of God:" or, as some render it, "do thou also make thyself worthy of immor-"tality."

Aude, hospes, contemnere opes; et te quoque dignum
Finge Deo.——

There is a strength in the expression, whereof our language is not capable. "I despise the

"world," says Dryden, "when I read it, and "myself when I attempt to translate it."

2. Poetry is sublime, when it conveys a lively idea of any grand appearance in art or nature. A nobler description of this sort I do not at present remember, than that which Virgil gives, in the first book of the Georgick, of a dark night, with wind, rain, and lightning: where Jupiter appears, encompassed with clouds and storms, darting his thunderbolts, and overturning the mountains, while the ocean is roaring, the earth trembling, the wild beasts fled away, the rain pouring down in torrents, the woods resounding to the tempest, and all mankind overwhelmed with consternation.*

* The following is a more literal translation: but I know not how to imitate, in modern language, the awful, (I had almost said, the dreadful) simplicity of the original.

High in the midnight storm enthron'd, heav'n's sire
Hurls from his blazing arm the bolt of fire.
Earth feels with trembling; every beast is fled;
And nations prostrate fall, o'erwhelm'd with dread.
Athos rolls headlong, where his lightnings fly
The rocks of Rhodope in ruin lie,
Or huge Keraunia. With redoubled rage
The torrent, rain and bellowing wind engage;
Loud in the woods afar the tempests roar,
And mountain billows burst in thunder on the shore.

Ipse pater, media nimborum in nocte, corusca
Fulmina molitur dextra; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit, fugere feræ, et mortalia corda
Per gentes humilis stravit pavor. Ille flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Keraunia telo
Dejicit; ingeminant austri, et densissimus imber;
Nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc littora plangunt.*

This description astonishes, both by the grandeur, and by the horrour of the scene, which is either wrapt in total darkness, or made visible by the glare of lightning. And the poet has expressed it with the happiest solemnity of style, and a sonorous harmony of numbers. As examples of the same sort of sublimity, namely of great images with a mixture of horrour, I might call the reader's attention to the storm in the beginning of the Eneid, the death of Cacus in the eighth book, to the account of tartarus in the sixth, and that of the burning of Troy in the second. But in the style of dreadful magnificence, nothing is superiour, and scarce any thing equal, to Milton's representation of hell and chaos, in the first and second book of Paradise Lost.

In the concluding paragraph of the same work, there is brought together, with uncommon strength of fancy, and rapidity of narrative, a

* Georg. i. 328.

number of circumstances, wonderfully adapted to the purpose of filling the mind with ideas of terrifick grandeur: the descent of the cherubim; the flaming sword; the archangel leading in haste our first parents down from the heights of paradise, and then disappearing; and, above all, the scene that presents itself on their looking behind them:

> They, looking back, all th' eastern cliff beheld
> Of paradise, so late their happy seat,
> Wav'd over by that flaming brand; the gate
> With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms.

To which the last verses form the most striking contrast that can be imagined:

> Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon.
> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and providence their guide.
> They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way.

The final couplet renews our sorrows, by exhibiting, with picturesque accuracy, the most mournful scene in nature; which yet is so prepared, as to raise comfort, and dispose to resignation. And thus, while we are at once melting in tenderness, elevated with pious hope, and overwhelmed with the grandeur of description, the divine poem concludes. What luxury of mental gratification is

here! Who would exchange this frame of mind (if nature could support it) for any other! How exquisitely does the faith of a christian accord with the noblest feelings of humanity!

3. Poetry is sublime, when, without any great pomp of images or of words, it infuses horrour by a happy choice of circumstances. When Macbeth (in Shakspeare) goes to consult the witches, he finds them performing rites in a cave; and upon asking what they were employed about, receives no other answer than this short one, "A deed "without a name." One's blood runs cold at the thought, that their work was of so accursed a nature, that they themselves had no name to express it by, or were afraid to speak of it by any name. Here is no solemnity of style, nor any accumulation of great ideas; yet here is the true sublime, because here is something that astonishes the mind, and fills it, without producing any real inconvenience.

Among other omens, which preceded the death of Dido, Virgil relates, that, when she was making an oblation of wine, milk and incense upon the altar, she observed the milk grow black, and found that the wine was changed into blood. This the poet improves into a circumstance of the utmost horrour, when he adds, that she never mentioned it to any person, not even to her sister,

who was her confidant on all other occasions: insinuating, that it filled her with so dreadful apprehension, that she had not courage even to attempt to speak of it. Perhaps I may be more struck with this, than many others are; as I once knew a young man, who was in the same state of mind, after having been frighted in his sleep, or, as he imagined, by a vision, which he had seen about two years before he told me of it. With much entreaty I prevailed on him to give me some account of his dream: but there was one particular, which he said that he would not, nay that he durst not, mention; and, while he was saying so, his haggard eyes, pale countenance, quivering lips, and faltering voice, presented to me such a picture of horrour, as I never saw before or since. I ought to add, that he was, in all other respects, in his perfect mind, cheerful, and active, and not more than twenty years of age.

Horrour has long been a powerful, and a favourite engine in the hands of the tragick poet. Eschylus employed it more than any other ancient artist. In his play called *The Furies*, he introduced Orestes haunted by a company of those frightful beings; intending thereby an allegorical representation of the torment which that hero suffered in his mind, in consequence of having slain his mother Clytemnestra, for the part she

had taken in the murder of his father. But to raise the greater horrour in the spectators, the poet was at pains to describe, with amazing force of expression, the appearance of the furies; and he brought upon the stage no fewer than fifty of them; whose infernal looks, hideous gestures, and horrible screams, had such effects on the women and children, that in the subsequent exhibitions of the play, the number of furies was by an express law limited, first, to fifteen, and afterwards to twelve. There are, no doubt, sublime strokes in the poet's account of these furies; and there is something very great in the idea of a person haunted by his own thoughts, in the form of such terrifick beings. Yet horrour of this kind I would hardly call sublime, because it is addressed rather to the eyes, than to the mind: and because it is easier to disfigure a man, so as to make him have the appearance of an ugly woman, than, by a brief description, or well chosen sentiment, to alarm and astonish the fancy. Shakspeare has, in my opinion, excited horrour of more genuine sublimity, and withal more useful in a moral view, when he makes Macbeth, in short and broken starts of exclamation, and without any pomp of images or of words, give an utterance half suppressed to those dreadful thoughts that were passing in his mind im-

mediately before and after the murder of Duncan, his guest, kinsman, sovereign, and benefactor. The agonies of a guilty conscience were never more forcibly represented, than in this tragedy; which may indeed be said, in the language of Aristotle, to purify the mind by the operation of terrour and pity; and which abounds more in that species of the sublime whereof I now speak, than any other performance in the English tongue. See its merits examined and explained, with the utmost correctness of judgment, beauty of language, and vivacity of imagination, in Mrs. Montagu's *essay on the writings and genius of Shakspeare*.

4. Poetry is sublime, when it awakens in the mind any great and good affection, as piety, or patriotism. This is one of the noblest effects of the art. The psalms are remarkable, beyond all other writings, for their power of inspiring devout emotions. But it is not in this respect only that they are sublime. Of the divine nature they contain the most magnificent descriptions that the soul of man can comprehend. The hundred and fourth psalm, in particular, displays the power and goodness of providence, in creating and preserving the world, and the various tribes of animals in it, with such majestick brevity and beauty, as it is vain to look for in any human composi-

tion. The morning song of Adam and Eve,* and many other parts of Paradise Lost, are noble effusions of piety, breathed in the most captivating strains: and Thomson's hymn on the seasons, if we overlook an unguarded word or two, is not inferiour.

Of that sublimity which results from the strong expression of patriotick sentiments, many examples might be quoted from the Latin poets, particularly Virgil, Horace, and Lucan: but there is a passage in Homer that suits the present purpose better than any other that now occurs. While Hector is advancing to attack the Greek intrenchments, an eagle lets fall a wounded serpent in the middle of his army. This Polydamas considers as a bad omen, and advises him to order a retreat. Hector rejects the advice with indignation. "Shall I be deterred from my duty," says he, "and from executing the commands of Ju-"piter, by the flight of birds? Let them fly on my "right hand or on my left, towards the setting, "or towards the rising sun, I will obey the coun-"sel of Jove, who is the king of gods and of "men." And then he adds that memorable aphorism, "To defend our country is the best of all

* Par. Lost, book v.

"auguries:"* or, as Pope has very well expressed it,

> Without a sign, his sword the brave man draws,
> And asks no omen, but his country's cause.

If we attend to all the circumstances, and reflect that both Hector and Homer believed in auguries, we must own that the sentiment is wonderfully great.

I might also quote, from the same book of the Iliad, Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus; which contains the noblest lesson of political wisdom, and the most enlivening motives to magnanimity. I shall not translate it literally, but confine myself to the general scope of the argument; and I shall give it in prose, that it may not seem to derive any part of its dignity from the charm of poetical numbers. "Why, O Glaucus, do we receive "from our people in Lycia the honours of so- "vereignty, and so liberal a provision? Is it not "in the hope, that we are to distinguish ourselves "by our virtue, as much as we are distinguished "by our rank? Let us act accordingly: that, when "they see us encountering the greatest perils of "war, they may say, we deserve the honours and "the dignity which we possess. If indeed" con-

* Εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης. Iliad. xii. 243.

tinues he, " by declining danger we could se- " cure ourselves against old age, and the grave, " I should neither fight myself in the front of the " battle, nor exhort you to do so. But since death " is unavoidable, and may assail us from so many " thousand quarters, let us advance, and either " gain renown by victory, or by our fall give glory " to the conqueror." The whole is excellent: but the grandeur and generosity of the conclusion can never be too highly applauded.

5. Poetry is also sublime, when it describes in a lively manner the visible effects of any of those passions that give elevation to the character. Such is that passage, in the conclusion of the same twelfth book of the Iliad, which paints the impetuosity and terrible appearance of Hector, storming the intrenchments, and pursuing the enemy to their ships. Extraordinary efforts of magnanimity, valour, or any other virtue, and extraordinary exertions of strength or power, are grand objects, and give sublimity to those pictures or poems, in which they are well represented. All the great poets abound in examples.

Yet in great strength, for example, there may be unwieldiness, or awkwardness, or some other contemptible quality, whereby the sublime is destroyed. Polyphemus is a match for five hundred Greeks; but he is not a grand object. We

hate his barbarity, and despise his folly, too much, to allow him a single grain of admiration. Ulysses, who in the hands of Polyphemus was nothing, is incomparably more sublime, when, in walking to his palace, disguised like a beggar, he is insulted, and even kicked by one of his own slaves, who was in the service of those rebels that were tempting his queen, plundering his household, and alienating the affections of his people. Homer tells us, that the hero stood firm, without being moved from his place by the stroke; that he deliberated for a moment, whether he should at one blow fell the traitor to the earth; but that patience and prudential thoughts restrained him. The brutal force of the cyclops is not near so strking as this picture; which displays bodily strength and magnanimity united. For what we despise we never admire; and therefore despicable greatness cannot be sublime.

Homer and Virgil have, each of them, given a description of a horse, which is very much and justly celebrated. But they dwell rather upon the swiftness and beauty of the animal, or on such of his passions as have little or no dignity; and therefore their descriptions, though most elegant and harmonious, cannot properly be termed sublime. In the book of Job, we have the picture of a war-horse in the most magnificent style.

The inspired poet expatiates upon the nobler qualities of that animal, his strength, impetuosity, and contempt of danger: and several of the words made use of, being figurative, and in their proper meaning expressive of human emotions, convey uncommon vivacity and elevation to the whole passage.

" Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast " thou clothed his neck with thunder?" alluding, perhaps, either to the noise of cavalry advancing; or to their speed, which the poet insinuates may be compared to that of lightning. " Canst thou " make him afraid, as a grasshopper? The glory of " his nostrils is terrible:" that is, the breath coming from his nostrils, which appear red with distention, makes him look as if fire and smoke were issuing from them; an idea, which Virgil has finely expressed in that line,

Collectumque premens volvit sub naribus ignem.

" He paweth in the valley, and *rejoiceth* in his " strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. " He *mocketh* at fear, and is not affrighted, nei- " ther turneth he back from the sword. The " quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear " and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with " fierceness and rage;" which probably signifies, according to some translations, He looks as if

he would swallow the ground;* " neither *believ-*
" *eth* he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He
" *saith* among the trumpets, *ha, ha;*" despises their alarm as much as we do that of a threatening which only provokes our laughter: " and he " smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the " captains, and the shouting." Besides the grandeur of the animal, as here painted, the sublimity of the passage is heightened exceedingly by the landscape; which presents to our view an army in order of battle, and makes us think we hear the crashing of armour, and the shouts of encountering multitudes.

In describing what is great, poets often employ sonorous language. This is suitable to the nature of human speech: for while we give utterance to that which elevates our imagination, we are apt to speak louder, and with greater solemnity, than at other times.† It must not however be thought, that highsounding words are essential to the sublime. Without a correspondent dignity of thought, or grandeur of images, a sonorous style is ridiculous; and puts one in mind of those persons, who raise great expectation, and

* In a very ingenious criticism on this passage in the *Guardian*, these words are differently understood.

† Essay on Poetry and Musick: last chapter.

assume a look of vast importance, when they have either nothing at all to say, or nothing that is worth notice. That style is sublime, which makes us conceive a great object, or a great effort, in a lively manner; and this may be done, when the words are very plain and simple. Nay, the plainest and simplest words have sometimes a happy effect in setting off what is intrinsically great; as an act of vast bodily strength is the more astonishing, when performed by a slight effort. This sort of sublimity we have in perfection in many of those passages of holy writ, that describe the operation of omnipotence: as, "God said, "Let there be light, and there was light: He "spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it "stood fast: Thou openest thy hand, they are "filled with good; thou hidest thy face, and they "are troubled."

It was observed, that the description of the horse in Job derives not a little of its dignity from those words, that properly signify human sentiments, and cannot be applied to an irrational animal, unless with a figurative meaning: "he "*rejoiceth in his strength;* he *mocketh at fear;* he "*believeth not* that it is the sound of the trumpet; "he *saith* among the trumpets, *ha, ha.*" It may now be remarked in general, that the sublime is often heightened, when, by means of figurative

language, the qualities of a superiour nature are judiciously applied to what is inferiour. Hence we see in poetry, and in more familiar language, the passions and feelings of rationality ascribed to that which is without reason and without life, or even to abstract ideas. On Adam's eating the forbidden fruit,

> Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
> In pangs, and nature gave a second groan;
> Sky lower'd, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept, at completing of the mortal sin
> Original.

Who is not sensible of the greatness of the thought conveyed in these words; which represent the earth and heaven affected with horrour at the sin then committed, and nature, or the universe, uttering in low thunder a groan of anguish? Had the poet simply said, that there was an earthquake, that the sky grew dark, and that some drops of rain fell, the account would no doubt have been sublime, as he would have given it. But is it not much more so, when we are informed, that this convulsion of nature was the effect of a sort of sensation diffused at that instant through the whole inanimate world? How dreadful must be the enormity of that guilt, which could produce an event so great, and withal so preternatural! Here are two sources of the sub-

lime: the prodigy strikes with horrour; the vastness of the idea overwhelms with astonishment.

In this place an unskilful poet would probably have brought on such a storm of thunder and lightning, and so violent an earthquake, as must have overturned the mountains, and set the woods on fire. But Milton, with better judgment, makes the alarm of that deep and awful kind, which cannot express itself in any other way, than by an inward and universal trembling: a sensation more affecting to the fancy, than those passions are, which vent themselves in outrageous behaviour; even as that sorrow is the most pathetick, which deprives one of the power of lamentation, and discovers itself only by fainting and groans. Besides, if this convulsion of the universe had been more violent, the unhappy offenders must have been confounded and terrified; which would not have suited the poet's purpose. For he tells us, and indeed the circumstances that follow the narrative (which, by the by, are exquisitely contrived) do all suppose, that our first parents were so intent on gratifying their impious appetite, that they took no notice of the prodigies, which accompanied the transgression.

Writers of weak judgment, when they attempt the sublime, are apt to exaggerate description, till they make it ridiculous. And to Milton's pru-

dent reserve on this occasion I cannot quote a better contrast, than that passage in Ovid, where the earth, as a person, lifts up her head, and, holding her hand before her face, complains to Jupiter, in a voice almost inarticulate with thirst, of the torments she was suffering from the conflagration brought upon her by the rashness of Phaeton; and, at the end of her speech, half suffocated with fire and smoke, draws back her head into the centre of her body. This is mere burlesque. Our fancy cannot be reconciled to so extravagant a fiction, nor conceive the earth to be an animal of so hideous and so ridiculous a form. But no art is necessary to reconcile us to the idea of the earth trembling with preternatural horrour at such a lamentable catastrophe as the fall of Adam and Eve—the first crime by which the sublunary creation was polluted, and a crime, that

Brought death into the world, and all our woe.

In the poetical parts of scripture, animation and sentiment are often, with the happiest effect, applied to things inanimate. " Let the floods clap " their hands, and let the hills rejoice together " before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the " earth. Canst thou send lightnings, that they " may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?—God

" sendeth forth light, and it goeth; he calleth it " again, and it obeyeth with fear." These and the like figures convey a lively and lofty idea of divine power, to which the inanimate parts of nature are as obsequious, as if they had intelligence and activity.

A common sentiment may be made sublime, when it is illustrated by an allusion to a grand object. " There is not," says Addison, " a sight " in nature so mortifying, as that of a distracted " person, when his imagination is troubled, and " his whole soul disordered and confused." This is true; but there is nothing very striking in it. But when the author adds, " Babylon in ruins is " not so melancholy a spectacle," he gives great dignity to the thought, by setting before us one of the most hideous pictures of desolation that ever was seen by mortal eyes; and at the same time declaring, what is no more than the truth, that even this is not so mournful a sight as the other. " The evils of life seem more terrible when " anticipated than they are found to be in reality," is no uncommon observation: but the same elegant author improves it into a sublime allegory, when he says, " The evils of this life appear, like " rocks and precipices, rugged and barren at a " distance; but, at our nearer approach, we find " little fruitful spots and refreshing springs mix-

" ed with the harshness and deformities of na-
" ture." This happy illustration pleases, not only by giving perspicuity to the thought, but also by suggesting the magnificent idea of a ridge of rocky precipices, as they appear at a distance to the traveller, and as he finds them to be on coming up to them. And it pleases yet further when we compare the object alluded to with the idea signified, and find so perfect a coincidence.

Things, as well as sentiments, may be made sublime by the same artifice. Bees are animals of wonderful sagacity, but of too diminutive a form to captivate our imagination. But Virgil describes their economy with so many fine allusions to the more elevated parts of nature, as raise our astonishment both at the skill of the poet, and at the genius of his favourite insect; whose little size becomes matter of admiration, when we consider those noble instincts wherewith the Creator has endowed it.

It may seem strange, and yet it is true, that the sublime is sometimes attained by a total want of expression: and this may happen, when by silence, or by hiding the face, we are made to understand, that there is in the mind something too great for utterance. In a picture representing

the sacrifice of Iphigenia, a Grecian painter * displayed varieties of sorrow in the faces of the other persons present; but, despairing to give any adequate expression to the countenance of her father Agamemnon, he made him cover it with his hands: an idea much admired by the ancient artists, and often imitated by the modern; as what was likely to raise in the spectator a more exquisite horrour, than any positive expression that could have been given to the face of the parent. Indeed, on such an occasion, it would be natural for a father to hide his face, as unable to endure so dreadful a sight; so that this contrivance was not only the most affecting to the beholder, but also the most proper in itself.

When Ulysses, in Homer, pays his compliments to the Grecian ghosts whom he had called up by incantation, we are told that, on seeing their old acquaintance and fellow soldier, they all conversed with him, Ajax only excepted; who, still resenting the affront he had received at Troy, when Ulysses in opposition to his claim obtained the arms of Achilles, stood aloof, disdaining to take notice of his rival, or to return any answer to his kind expostulations. It is cer-

* Timanthes. See Plin. Hist. Nat. xxxv. 36. Val. Max viii. 11. Quintil. ii. 14.

tain, that no less a person than Virgil admired this incident; for he copies it in his account of the infernal world: where Eneas, meeting Dido, endeavours to excuse his desertion of her, urging his unwillingness, and the command of Jupiter: but she, says the poet, turned her eyes another way, and minded no more what he said, than if she had been flint or marble.

This silence of Dido has been blamed by a very learned critick: who seems to think, that, though it was becoming in Ajax not to speak, because he was a hero, it would be natural for an injured woman to upbraid a faithless lover with the keenest reproaches. But I take the remark, rather as a joke upon that volubility of tongue, which satirists have imputed to the female sex, than as a serious criticism. Dido, as described by Virgil, is a more dignified character, than Homer's Ajax; and therefore, if the silence was majestick in him, on account of his greatness of mind, it must be equally so in her. If he, as a hero, was superiour to other men, she, as a heroine, was superiour to other women.

Some writers (and the same thing is too often attempted in the pulpit) have endeavoured to express, by an elaborate soliloquy, what they suppose might pass in the mind of Abraham, on being commanded to offer up his son. This I can-

not but think injudicious. It seems to detract not a little from the father of the faithful, to represent him as deliberating whether or not he should obey God's command, or conjecturing for what purpose so hard a task had been enjoined him. Let a man of sensibility, after hearing one of those rhetorical flourishes, read the narrative in the words of Moses, and he will *feel*, how much more affecting the one is in its simple majesty, than the other in its gaudy ornaments; and what inexpressible sublimity the character of the great patriarch derives from his emphatick silence and prompt obedience. He knew the command was divine, and consequently good; and that, whatever his paternal emotions might be, his duty was, instantly to obey. He therefore " rose " up early in the morning," and began that journey, which he then thought would have so melancholy a termination. I may add, that there is something almost equally great in the silent submission of Isaac; who, being at this time about thirty years of age, might have attempted resistance or escape, if his faith and his piety had not been worthy the son of such a father.

Things in themselves great may become more or less sublime, according to the nature of the allusions, whereby the description of them is illustrated. Longinus, who seems to have thought

not so favourably of the Odyssey as it deserves, represents the genius of the author as in the decline when he wrote that poem; but characterizes that decline by two noble similitudes. "In the Odyssey," says he, "Homer may be "likened to the setting sun, whose grandeur "still remains, though his beams have lost their "meridian heat." What a beautiful idea! Does it not even adorn the object which it is intended in some degree to depreciate? And a little after, he has this remark. "Like the ocean, whose "shores, when deserted by the tide, marks out "the extent to which it sometimes flows, so "Homer's genius, when ebbing into the fables "of the Odyssey, plainly discovers, how vast it "once must have been." To be extolled by ordinary writers is not so flattering, as to be censured by a critick like Longinus, who tempers his blame with so much politeness and dignity. Indeed, it has been remarked of him, that he exemplifies every kind of good writing, so as in grandeur of thought, and beauty of expression, to vie with the author whom he celebrates.

Instances of ideas or images intrinsically great, rendered more so by the allusions employed in describing them, are common in Homer, Virgil, Milton, and all the sublime poets. So many ex-

amples crowd on one's memory, that one knows not which to prefer. Achilles in arms is a grand idea: but Homer throws upon it additional splendour, when he compares him to the moon, to the blaze of a beacon seen at a distance in a night of tempest, to a star or comet, and to the sun. Milton magnifies the strength and intrepidity of Satan, when he says,

> Satan alarm'd,
> Collecting all his might, dilated stood
> Like Teneriff or Atlas, unremoved:
> His stature reach'd the sky, and on his crest
> Sat horrour.

The fires lighted up in the Grecian camp, and scattered over the plains of Troy, would be a beautiful appearance: but Homer makes it rise upon us in glory, by comparing them to the moon and stars illuminating the sky, when the clouds separate, and the pure ether shines forth in all the magnificence of midnight.

But observe, that great ideas are not always alluded to, in the description of great objects. For of two things, different in nature, that which is upon the whole inferiour may possess a quality or two in a more exquisite degree, than that which is in all other respects more elevated. How superiour is a man, especially a wise man,

and still more especially, the wisest, and one of the greatest of men, to a vegetable! And yet we are warranted, on the best authority, to say that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field.

We must, therefore, in all cases, attend to that circumstance of likeness, upon which an allusion is founded. Homer compares Hector to a rock tumbling from the top of a mountain. Were we to hear nothing more of this similitude, it might appear even ridiculous: for one might imagine it was intended to paint the particular manner, in which that hero descended from a high to a lower ground: and surely, a man rolling headlong, like a stone, down a steep place, is an image of neither dignity nor elegance; nor can it raise any person in our esteem, to say of him that he is like a stone. But when we learn, that the poet means by this comparison to inform us, that Hector was irresistible while he advanced, and immoveable when he stopt, we are struck with the propriety, and at the same time with the greatness, of the allusion; for it heightens what we had before conceived of the warriour's impetuosity. If a huge fragment of a rock, torn from the top of a mountain by a winter torrent, were rolling and thundering down to the plain, no human power would be able to op-

pose it; and when it stopt, very great power would be necessary to move it.

"I will make Babylon a possession for the bit-"tern, and pools of water: and I will *sweep it* "*with the besom of destruction.*"* The instrument alluded to is one of the meanest; and yet the idea conveyed by the allusion is exceedingly great. For it is not the manner, but the consequences, of the destruction, that are here painted: it will be so complete, that not the least memorial of that city shall remain: even as on a floor that is swept, no trace is to be seen of the dust that was there formerly, or of the figures that might have been drawn in it. The allusion has also this emphatical meaning, that the people of Babylon are a nuisance, and that the earth will be purified by their being driven away; and it implies further, that all the efforts of human power are but dust, when the arm of the Almighty is lifted up against them.

"Ruin fiercely drives her ploughshare o'er "creation," says Young, speaking of the end of the world. The driving of a plough over a field is not a grand object. Yet the figure conveys a sublime idea to those who know, that some ancient nations, when they meant to destroy a city,

* Isaiah, chap. xiv.

not only rased the buildings, but ploughed up the foundation; to intimate, that it was never to be rebuilt any more. The poet's allegory, therefore, typifies a destruction that is to be total, and final. If I were to criticise it further, I would say, that it is pity it should be above the apprehension of common readers: for the sublime is generally the worse for being wrapt up in learning, or in any other disguise. What we do not clearly perceive, we cannot rationally admire. It is true, that, where sublimity with horrour is intended, a certain degree of darkness may have a good effect; as unknown objects, viewed through mist or in the twilight, appear of greater size than the reality, and of more hideous proportion. But the example before us is rather ambiguous, than obscure: the learned reader knows that it comprehends a grand allusion; but to the unlearned it may seem inadequate to the subject, by reason of its meanness.

Out of many that occur I quote a few examples to show, according to what has been already observed, that the sublime is not always accompanied with sonorous expression, or a pomp of images. These, when too anxiously sought after, or when they are not supported with a correspondent majesty of thought, are called bombast or false sublime; an unpardon-

able impropriety; which has in serious writing as bad an effect, as ignorance united with impudence, or a solemn behaviour with a mean understanding, would have in conversation. Most people, who are in earnest in what they say, naturally elevate their voice and style, when they speak of what is great; but, if they be of polite manners, that elevation is tempered with modesty: and they rather lay restraint on their feelings, than express them with the most emphatical utterance. Good writers, in like manner, rise in sound and solemnity of phrase, when their thoughts aspire to sublimity; but their style is always simple, and their ornaments natural: and they often throw out noble ideas in the plainest words, and without any ornament.

Yet he, who aims at the sublime, must not trust so implicitly to the grandeur of his thoughts, as to be careless about his expression. Well chosen words, and an elegant arrangement of them, are justly reckoned by Longinus among the sources of sublimity. Even when the thought is both good and great, the greatness, or the elegance, may be lost or lessened by an unskilful writer: and that in several ways.

First, by too minute description, and too many words. For, when we are engrossed by admiration or astonishment, it is not natural for us

to speak much, or attend to the more diminutive qualities of that which we contemplate. On seeing a lofty edifice, if the first thing we did were to count the windows, or the panes of glass in each, it would be a sign of bad taste, and a proof, that we wanted either imagination to comprehend, or sensibility to take pleasure in, the grandeur of the whole. Were a hero to appear in arms before us, we should not think of looking at his teeth, or observing whether his beard were close shaved, or his nails nicely cut; at first, it is likely, that we should take notice of little besides his general appearance, and more striking features; or, if those other small matters were to engage our whole attention, might it not justly be said, that we had no true sense of the dignity of the person, nor any curiosity to know those particulars concerning him, which alone were worthy to be known? Writers, therefore, who describe too nicely the minute parts of a grand object, must both have disengaged their own minds, and must also withdraw ours, from the admiration of what is sublime in it. A few examples will make this plain.

Had Homer or had Milton been to describe the chariot of the sun, he would probably have confined himself to its dazzling appearance, or vast magnitude, or some of those other qualities

of it, which at the first glance might be supposed to fill the imagination, and raise the astonishment of the beholder. But when Ovid tells us, that the axle was of gold, the pole of gold, the outward circumference of the wheels of gold, but that the spokes were silver,* we are not astonished at all; and are apt to think, from the minuteness of the account, that the author had examined this chariot, rather with the curiosity of a coachmaker or silversmith, than with the eye of a poet or painter. Such a detail resembles an inventory more than a description: as if it were material, in order to form a right idea of Phaeton's unlucky expedition, that we should know the *value* of the chariot in which he rode.

We read, in a certain author, of a giant, who in his wrath tore off the top of a promontory, and flung it at the enemy; and so huge was the mass, that you might, says he, have seen goats browsing on it as it flew through the air. This is unnatural and ridiculous. A spectator would have been too much confounded at the force, that could wield it, and at the astonishing appearance of such a ruin, hurled through the sky, to attend to any circumstance so minute

* Aureus axis erat, temo aureus, aurea summæ
Curvatura rotæ, radiorum argenteus ordo.
Metam. ii.

as what is here specified. Besides, the motion of such a fragment must have been too rapid, to allow the goats to keep their ground, or to admit the possibility of seeing them in the act of feeding. So that, whatever this idea may add to the magnitude, it must take away from the swiftness; and make the vast body seem to our imagination, as if it had loitered, or stopt, in its course, to give the beholder time to examine its curiosities, and that the poor goats might be in no danger of losing their hold.

In sublime description, though the circumstances that are specified be few, yet, if they be well chosen and great, the reader's fancy will complete the picture: and often, as already hinted, the image will not be less astonishing, if in its general appearance there be something indefinite. When Hector forces the Greek intrenchments, the poet describes him by several grand allusions, and by this in particular,

> Now rushing in the furious chief appears,
> *Gloomy as night*, and shakes two shining spears.*

In what respect he resembled night, Homer leaves to be determined by the reader's fancy. This conveys no positive idea; but we are hence

* Pope's Homer. Book 12. near the end.

led to imagine, that there must have been something peculiarly dark and dreadful in his look, as it appeared to the enemy: and thus we make the picture stronger perhaps than it would have been, if the author had drawn it more minutely. * A

* Speculative men often err, from an immoderate attachment to some one principle; of which, because it holds in many cases, they think it must hold in all. Gilbert, in the course of his observations on the magnet, grew so fond of magnetism, as to fancy, that the phenomena of the universe might be solved by it. And electricity seems now to have become almost as great a favourite of many ingenious philosophers.

That poetical description ought to be distinct and lively, and such as might both assist the fancy, and direct the hand, of the painter, is an acknowledged truth in criticism. The best poets are the most picturesque. Homer is in this respect so admirable, that he has been justly called the prince of painters, as well as of poets. And one cause of the insipidity of the Henriade is, that its scenery and images are described in too general terms, and want those distinguishing peculiarities that captivate the fancy, and interest the passions.

But should every thing in poetry be picturesque? No. To the right imitation of nature, shade is necessary, as well as light. We may be powerfully affected by that which is not visible at all; and of visible things some cannot be, and many ought not to be, painted: and the mind is often better pleased with images of its own forming, or finishing, than with those that are set before

genius like Cowley would have interrupted the narrative, in order to enumerate all those particulars in which Hector resembled night; comparing his shield to the full moon; his eyes to stars;

it complete in all their colours and proportions. From the passage referred to in the text, and from many others that might be quoted, it appears that in description Homer himself is not always definite; and that he knows how to affect his readers by leaving occasionally a part of his picture to be supplied by their imagination. Of Helen's person he gives no minute account: but, when he tells us, that her loveliness was such as to extort the admiration of the *oldest* Trojan senators, who, had, and who owned they had, so good reason to dislike her, he gives a higher idea of the power of her charms, than could have been conveyed by any description of her eyes, mouth, shape, and other distinguishing beauties.

Algarotti is of opinion, that the poetry of the northern nations is, in general, less picturesque than that of Italy. Virgil, says he, gives so exact a representation of Dido's dress when she goes a hunting, that a painter might follow it in every particular:

> Tandem progreditur, magna stipante caterva,
> Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo;
> Cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,
> Aurea purpuream subnectit fibula vestem.

Whereas Milton describes the *nuda bellezza* of Eve by general terms and abstract ideas, that present no image to the mind:

the flashing of his armour to comets and meteors; the dust that flew about him, to clouds and darkness; the clangour of his weapons, to the scream of the owl; the terrour he struck into the

> *Grace* was in all her steps, *heaven* in her eye,
> In every gesture *dignity* and *love*.

Of this criticism I would observe, that the censure here passed on the poetry of the north, as compared with that of the *modern* Italians at least, will hardly be admitted by those who understand and have read our great poets, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Thomson; from whom instances without number might be brought of imagery as vivid and particular, as it is in the power of language to convey. Milton, where his subject requires that he should be *exactly descriptive*, as in his fourth, seventh, ninth, and eleventh books, is in this respect not inferiour to Homer himself. Indeed, when his scene of action lies *beyond the visible diurnal sphere;* when, with a view to raise astonishment or horrour, he paints what was never seen by mortal eye, it is impossible for him to be strictly picturesque. Figures so deeply shaded cannot present a definite outline: forms of such terrifick grandeur must be to a certain degree invested with darkness.

As to the description objected to by the critick: I think it would *not* have been improved by being made more particular. Nor is the example at all parallel to that of Dido. The varieties of *dress* are innumerable: and if the poet meant that we should have a distinct idea of Dido's attire, it was necessary for him to describe it as minutely as he has done. But no minute de-

enemy, to the fear occasioned by apparitions; with perhaps a great deal more to the same purpose: which would have taken off our attention from the hero, and set us a wondering at the singularity of the author's wit. It ought to be con-

scription is necessary to present the nuda bellezza of Eve to our imagination, or to improve the idea which in a case of this kind every imagination would form for itself.

Algarotti has overlooked a very material circumstance; namely, that this account of Adam's first interview with Eve is given by Adam himself to an angel, who needed no information on the subject of her beauty, because he had seen her; and to whom it would have been highly indecent to particularize her bodily perfections. Adam therefore is brief in this part of the narrative; and insinuates, that, at her first appearance, his attention was chiefly engaged by the *delicacy* and the *dignity* of her *mind*, as they displayed themselves externally in her looks and demeanour. In a word, the sanctity of the state of innocence, the purity of the loves of paradise, the sublime character of the speaker, the veneration due to the hearer, and that majesty of thought and of style which so peculiarly characterizes the divine poem, would all have been violated, if the poet's ideas had in this place been conformable to those of the critick. Algarotti was probably thinking of the luscious pictures of Tasso, and the sensualities of Rinaldo and Armida: but Milton was conversing with gods, breathing "empyreal air," and describing "*immortal* fruits of joy and love." I know not whether any part of the poem does more honour to his judgment.

sidered, that the rapidity of Hector's motion requires a correspondent rapidity in the narrative, and leaves no time for long description; and it may be supposed, that the persons who saw him would not stand gazing, and making similes, but would fly before him, if they were Greeks, or rush on along with him, if they were his own people.

When an author, in exhibiting what he thinks great, says every thing that can be said, he confounds his readers with the multitude of circumstances; and, instead of rousing their imagination, leaves it in a state of indolence, by giving it nothing to do; making them at the same time suspect, that as he has but few great ideas to offer, he is determined to make the most of what he has. Besides, long details incumber the narrative, and lengthen the poem without necessity. Brief description, therefore, and concise expression, may be considered as essential to the sublime.

And nowhere do they promote it so effectually, as in the poetical and historical parts of scripture; which, however, more than any other compositions, have had their grandeur impaired by the verbosity of paraphrase. Castalio, in his *Sacred Dialogues* is so imprudent in this respect, that, if his character, as a man of learning and

piety, were not thoroughly established, we should be tempted to think he had meant to burlesque some passages of the Old Testament. He makes Abraham (for example), while preparing entertainment for the angels, bustle about with the officiousness and prattle of one of Fielding's landladies. Indeed these dialogues are so frequently farcical, not to say indecent, that I wonder the reading of them is not discontinued in our schools. I know it has been said, in their behalf, that the language is good, being formed on the model of Terence. But what idea of propriety in writing can he have, who applies the style of comedy to the illustration of sacred history? What would be thought of an English divine, who should in his sermons imitate the phraseology of Mercutio, Benedict, or Will Honeycomb? Nor is Castalio correct, even in this sense of the word. He is often harsh: he admits modes of expression, that are not in Terence, or in any good writer: and his desire of diffusing a classical air through his work makes him give a new and ambiguous meaning to Roman words, * where, if he had adopted the common, and what may be called the technical, terms of theology, he would have

* As when he uses *adventitius* for *proselyte*, *genius* for *angel*, *Vejupiter* for *diabolus*, &c.

expressed himself more clearly, and without any real impropriety.

Our poetical paraphrases of the psalms are not less injurious to the original. Sternhold and Hopkins are confessedly beneath criticism; yet to those, who would rather see in the pulpit a threadbare coat than a laced one, are not in their rustick guise more offensive, than Brady and Tate in their finical ornaments. If we look into Buchanan, what can we say, but that the learned author, with great command of Latin expression, had no true relish for the emphatick conciseness, and unadorned simplicity, of the inspired poets? Arthur Johnston is not so verbose, and has of course more vigour: but his choice of a couplet, which keeps the reader always in mind of the puerile epistles of Ovid, was singularly injudicious. As psalms may, in prose, as easily, as in verse, be adapted to musick, why should we seek to force those divine strains into the measures of Roman or of modern song? He who transformed Livy into iambicks, and Virgil into monkish rhyme, did not in my opinion act more absurdly. In fact, sentiments of devotion are rather depressed than elevated by the arts of the European versifier.

Secondly: Though an author's ideas be great, they may yet fall short of sublimity by excessive

amplification. Hyperbolical phrases, for reasons assigned in another place,* are often natural, and may therefore promote the sublime; but if they are not used with discretion and a due regard to the proportions of nature, they become ridiculous.

A translator of Virgil concludes that elegant description (in the second Eneid) of the felling of a mountain ash, with this enormous exaggeration. The tree, he says,

> Headlong with half the shatter'd mountain flies,
> And stretch'd out, huge in length, th' unmeasured ruin lies.

Before we can admit this hyperbole to be in any degree tolerable, we must suppose, either that the mountain was a hillock, or that the tree must have been at least a thousand yards high and fifty in diameter. Virgil only says, with his usual propriety,

> —— traxitque jugis avolsa ruinam.
> And drags a ruin from the mountain's brow.

When a certain poet speaks of one of his champions destroying a troop of horse with a single blow; and of another, whose impetuosity was

* Essay on Poetry and Musick. Part ii. chap. 1. sect. 3.

such, that he fought for a considerable time after his head was cut off; he conveys to us the idea, not of strength or courage in the warriours, but of folly in himself. To magnify in this manner is as easy, as to multiply by a thousand; which only requires, that three ciphers be subjoined to the sum. At this rate, every child may be a sublime writer; the only qualifications necessary to contrive such things being, ignorance of nature, and a total disregard both to probability and to possibility. But nothing is sublime, that does not create in the mind a *pleasing* astonishment; and nothing can please a rational being, but what is consistent with itself, and regulated by the standard of nature.

When Cowley attempts to be great, he frequently becomes monstrous.* A true poet exhibits the most magnificent ideas without any apparent effort; as if they were familiar to him, and such as he can mould and manage at his pleasure. The one labours ineffectually, and awkwardly, to do what is above his strength; and makes himself ridiculous, by showing at once his vanity, and his weakness: of the other, after he has, with ease and with grace, performed the greatest exertions,

* See the Davideis *passim*, particularly the account of Goliah.

we say, that " half his strength he put not forth." The former reminds one of the Asteropeus in the Iliad, straining with all his might, and distorting his body in vain, to wrench the spear of Achilles from the bank, into which, when flung by the hero's arm, it had penetrated to the middle: the latter may be compared to Achilles himself, who laying his hand upon it draws it forth at once.*

Thirdly: Mean words and mean circumstances, introduced in the description of what is great or elegant, will destroy the sublimity, and debase the beauty. The duke of Buckingham, in some complimental verses addressed to Pope, has this couplet,

> And yet so wonderful sublime a thing
> As the great Iliad scarce could make me sing.

The passage is not much elevated, it is true; yet who does not see, that the little dignity it has is debased by the word *thing;* which is chosen merely because it happens to make a rhyme? " Homer's Iliad is a sublime thing:" the phrase would be despicable even in prose.

Take an example of a mean circumstance from Blackmore's Paraphrase of Job, a work in which one may find specimens of every sort of bad writing.

* Iliad xvi. 170, 200.

I solemnly pronounce, that I believe
My blest Redeemer does for ever live.
When future ages shall their circuit end,
And bankrupt time shall his last minute spend,
Then he from heaven in triumph shall descend.

How groveling must be the imagination of a writer, who, in meditating on a passage so sublime, and a subject so awful, can bring himself to think and speak of bankruptcy! Such an idea, in such a place, is contemptible beyond expression: and its absurdity is equal to its meanness. A bankrupt is a person, who is either pitied for having lost, or blamed for having squandered, the money with which he ought to have paid his debts. But who can imagine, that, at the end of the world, time will be either blamed or pitied, for having squandered, or lost his minutes!

Before I conclude, I must be a little more particular in describing the nature of what I call mean expressions: for against them I am anxious that we be more especially on our guard; first, because they are a grievous blemish in every sort of elegant writing; and, secondly, because in the provincial dialects they abound to such a degree, that without great attention, or much good advice, it is not easy for us to avoid them.

And first: Those words are not mean, which are so necessary at all times, that it is impossible to

speak without them on any subject. And most of the classical words in every tongue are of this character. Words are not mean, because they are plain; nor elegant, because none but men of learning understand them: on the contrary, every thing in style is blamable, which is obscure or ambiguous to an attentive reader. We may have heard some persons celebrated for a *fine* style, because they were on every occasion dragging in strange words, to show their learning. But this is contrary to every rule of sound criticism, and to the practice of all good writers. "Let there be light, and there was light," is a much more elegant sentence than, "Let light irradiate the "universe, and instantly light flashed into exist-"ence:" the former consists of words, that no person who knows English can misunderstand; the latter has more words than are necessary, and those are affected and ill chosen, and such as he only can understand, who knows something of Latin, as well as of English. It is said of the style of Demosthenes, that, though the most artful that had ever appeared in Greece, there was not a phrase in it, which the meanest Athenian citizen did not understand. And in fact, the most elegant authors are in every language the most perspicuous; as Addison and Swift, in English; Cesar and Cicero, in Latin; Metastasio, Tasso,

and Ariosto, in Italian; and Vertot, Boileau, and the archbishop of Cambray, in French. Uncommon expressions are in general to be avoided, where they can be avoided. It is pedantry to affect them. And therefore, we must not imagine, that words are mean, or not elegant, merely because they are common.

But secondly: Many words there are in every tongue, which are not used, except by illiterate persons, or on very familiar occasions, or in order to express what the decorum of polite society requires that we conceal: and these may be called *mean words;* and are never to be introduced in sublime description, in elegant writing, or on any solemn or serious topick.

Such, in the first place, are vulgar proverbs. These, though they may have a good meaning, are too familiar to find a place in good style. We have heard common proverbs, particularly those of this country, celebrated for their force and truth: and some may perhaps wonder to see them proscribed as inelegant. I allow them to be emphatical, both in this and in other countries; for otherwise, nobody would think it worth while to remember them. But still they form a part of the vulgar dialect, and are therefore themselves vulgar. One of the common people may be a person of great worth and sense: but place him in

fashionable company, and both you and he will perceive, that there is something awkward in his appearance; you may esteem him for his virtue, but cannot reconcile yourself to his air and manner: and you must be sensible that he and his present associates are not well suited to one another. Sancho Pança is in many things ridiculous, but in nothing more than in his style, which is almost entirely made up of proverbs. In prayers and sermons, and on every solemn occasion, one must feel that these aphorisms would have a bad effect, and give a ludicrous turn both to the subject and to the speaker. Even in conversation they are rarely used by persons of polite manners, as they not only savour of vulgarity, but also breed suspicion of a barren fancy: for he who retails proverbs, gives only what he has borrowed; that is, what he has heard from others: and borrowing generally implies poverty.

Common forms of compliment, though innocent in themselves, and though in society agreeable, because customary, must not appear in elegant writing: first, because they are too familiar to the ear, being used on every trivial occasion; and secondly, because they derive their meaning from the manners of particular times and places. How ridiculous would it be, if a translator of Vir-

gil were to make Eneas introduce himself to Dido, with these words,

> Madam, your majesty beholds in me
> Your most obliged, obedient, humble servant,
> Eneas, prince of Troy!

A painter, who would represent the interview, might with equal propriety dress the Trojan in a full-bottomed wig, with a hat and feather under his arm, and make him bend his body to the ground in all the formality of a minuet bow. There is great dignity in the complimental expressions of Homer. Priam addresses the most dreadful of all his enemies, by the appellation of "godlike Achilles."* Achilles begins a speech to Ulysses with these words, "O wise Ulysses, "descended from Jove;" And calls Ajax (who, by the by, had spoken to him with provoking bitterness) "divine Ajax, son of Telamon, prince of "the people."* Milton is perhaps still more attentive to this decorum; as his persons are of greater dignity than heroes. Adam addresses Eve in these exalted terms,

> Daughter of God and man, accomplish'd Eve—
> Best image of myself, and dearer half—
> My fairest, my espoused, my latest found,
> Heaven's last best gift, my ever new delight—

* Iliad. xxiv. * Iliad. ix.

and Eve's complaisance to her husband is equally sublime;

> Offspring of heaven and earth, and all earth's lord—
> O thou, in whom my thoughts find all repose,
> My glory, my perfection.

Such compliments are not made vulgar by common use; and have, besides, a significancy, which all the world would acknowledge to be solemn and majestick.

A third class of expressions, that by their meanness would debase every sort of good writing, are those idioms, commonly called *cant;* a jargon introduced by ignorant or affected persons, and which the most perfect acquaintance with every good author in a language would not enable one to understand. Their nature may be better known from a few examples, than from a general definition. To say, of a person, whose conversation is tedious, that he is *a bore;* of a drunk man, that he is *in liquor*, that he is *disguised*, that he is *half seas over*, that he *has his load*, or that he *clips the king's English;* of one who plays with an intention to lose, that he *plays booty;* of one, who has nothing to reply, that he is *dumbfounded;* of a transaction committed to writing, that it is taken down *in black and white;* of a person baffled in any enterprise, that he is *beat hol-*

low, that he has received *check-mate*, or that he is *routed*, *horse*, *foot*, *and dragoons;* of one who arrives on the very point of being too late, that he has *saved his distance;* of one, who has enriched himself by any business, that he has *feather'd his nest:* these, and the like idioms, are all cant: they derive no authority from the analogy or grammar of a language; and polite writers and speakers, unless when they mean to speak or write ludicrously, avoid them as vulgarities of the lowest order.

There are some professions, that have a peculiar dialect; or certain phrases at least, which are not understood by people of other professions. Thus seamen make use of terms, which none but seamen are acquainted with: and the same thing is true of architects, painters, musicians, and many other artists. Now, in sublime writings such words are to be avoided; partly, because, being technical, they have something of a vulgar appearance; and chiefly, because to the great part of readers they are unintelligible. That passage of Dryden's Virgil, in which he absurdly imitates the sea dialect, has often been repeated and censured:

> Tack to the larboard, and stand out to sea,
> Veer starboard sea and land:

and is chargeable with something worse than affectation; for I am assured by an experienced mariner, that it has no meaning. Milton sometimes errs in this way; especially when he alludes to architecture and astronomy. He speaks of *cornice*, *freeze*, and *architrave*, and of rays *culminating from the equator;* which is very unsuitable to the heroick style. For, as Addison well observes, " it is one of the greatest beauties of po-" etry to make hard things intelligible, and to " deliver what is abstruse of itself in such easy " language, as may be understood by ordinary " readers. Besides," continues he, " the know-" ledge of a poet should rather seem born with " him, or inspired, than drawn from books and " systems." True poetry is addressed to all mankind; and therefore its ideas are general; and its language ought to be so plain, as that every person acquainted with the poetical dialect may understand it.

It is scarce necessary to add, that all phrases are mean, which come under the denomination of barbarism, or provincial idiom; because they suggest the ideas of vulgar things, and illiterate persons. Meanness, blended with dignity, is one of those incongruities that provoke laughter. And therefore provincial idioms introduced in a solemn subject would make it, or the author at

least, ridiculous. The speeches, in Ovid, of Ajax and Ulysses contending for the armour of Achilles, cannot be called sublime; but artful they are, and elegant, in a high degree. That of Ajax has been translated with tolerable exactness into one of the vulgar dialects of North Britain. When we read the original, we are seriously affected: but when we look into the Scotch version, we immediately fall a laughing. I was struck with this, when a schoolboy, but could not at that time account for it. The thoughts were nearly the same in both: what then could make the one solemn, and the other ridiculous? It is the mixture of mean words and serious sentiments, and of clownish and heroick manners, contrasted with what we remember of the original, that produces a jumble of discordant ideas; and such a jumble, as may be found in most ludicrous appearances when we analyse them.*

The last thing I shall mention upon this head, is, that turns of wit have a bad effect in sublime writing: for one does not naturally think of witticism, when one is engrossed by any of those grand ideas that raise pleasing astonishment. In fact, sublime poets are seldom, what we call,

* See an Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition. chap. ii.

men of wit: Shakspeare is an exception; but he is a singular one. For wit arises from the discovery of minute relations and likenesses that had escaped the notice of others; and therefore a talent for it implies a habit of minute attention to circumstances and words: whereas a sublime genius directs his view chiefly to the great and more important phenomena of art and nature. They who excel in epigram have not often produced sublime verses: and lord Chesterfield, who was a man of wit, and an epigrammatist, appears, from his letters, to have had no relish for the sublime poets.

Let it not be thought, because sublimity is one of the highest virtues of fine writing, that therefore no composition is excellent but what is sublime. A book, that partakes not of this quality at all, may please by its elegance, instruct by its doctrines, or amuse by its wit and humour, and in all, or in any of these respects, be truly valuable. Rivulets and meadows have their charms, as well as mountains and the ocean. Though Horace had never written any thing but his epistles, in which there is no attempt at sublimity, he must always have been considered as an elegant and instructive poet.

Nor think, because most of the preceding examples are taken from poetry, that the sublime is

peculiar to that art. In the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes; in the histories of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Livy; in the moral writings of Addison and Johnson, of Seneca, Plato, and Antoninus; and especially in the doctrinal and historical parts of holy writ, are many instances of the true sublime, both in sentiment and description. The same thing may be said of almost every serious author, who composes with elegance.

Most of the writers on this subject have considered our passion for what is great and elevated, as a proof of the dignity of the soul, and of the glorious ends for which it was made. The words of Longinus to this purpose are well translated by Dr. Akenside. "God has not intended man for "an ignoble being; but, bringing us into life, and "the midst of this wide universe, as before a mul- "titude assembled at some heroick solemnity, "that we might be spectators of all his magnifi- "cence and candidates high in emulation for the "prize of glory, has therefore implanted in our "souls an inextinguishable love of every thing "great and exalted, of every thing which appears "divine beyond our comprehension. Whence it "comes to pass, that even the whole world is not "an object sufficient for the depth and rapidity of "human imagination, which often sallies forth

" beyond the limits of all that surrounds us. Let " any man cast his eye through the whole circle " of our existence, and consider how especially it " abounds with excellent and grand objects, and " he will soon acknowledge for what enjoyments " and pursuits we are destined."

These are the sentiments of a pagan philosopher. And how noble, (I had almost said, how divine) must they appear, when compared with the selfish, sensual, and groveling ideas of the Epicurean, or with the narrow views and brutal insensibility of the ancient and modern Pyrrhonist! I must not omit, that Addison has adopted the same turn of thinking: and, enlightened with the knowledge, and warmed with the piety, of a christian, has greatly improved it. " The Su- " preme Being," says he, " has so formed the " soul of man, that nothing but Himself can be " its last, adequate, and proper happiness. Be- " cause therefore a great part of our happiness " must arise from the contemplation of his being, " that he might give our souls a just relish of " such a contemplation, he has made them natu- " rally delight in the apprehension of what is " great and unlimited. Our admiration, which is " a very pleasing emotion of the mind, immedi- " ately rises at the consideration of any object that " takes up a great deal of room in the fancy; and,

" by consequence, will improve into the highest " pitch of astonishment and devotion, when we " contemplate his nature, who is neither circum- " scribed by time or place, nor to be compre- " hended by the largest capacity of a created " being."

I shall only add, that our taste for the sublime, cherished into a habit, and directed to proper objects, may, by preserving us from vice, which is the vilest of all things, and by recommending virtue for its intrinsick dignity, be useful in promoting our moral improvement. The same taste will also lead to the study of nature, which every where displays the sublimest appearances. And no study has a better effect upon the heart. For it keeps men at a distance from criminal pursuits, yields a variety of inoffensive and profitable amusement, and gives full demonstration of the infinite goodness and greatness of the adorable Creator.

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